113, 564 Kerala AW11

[For information on the castes of Kerala see 33: Bhattacharya, AW1 India, category 116, pp. 106-108, 126 and 151-152.]

121 system of the central area of South Malabar and
101 Cochin, with brief references to social structure and Nayar kinship in North Malabar. No account is given of Travancore, since no fieldwork was done in that area.

631 564 III The Traditional Political System in the Central Kingdoms

(1) Caste and Territorial Divisions

Throughout Kerala, the highest Hindu caste was the Nambudiri Brahmans, ritual and scholastic leaders of the people, who today form one hundredth of the total population. Carriers of the Sanskrit language and of ancient Vedic culture, they are thought to have entered Malabar by peaceful infiltration from the eastern plateau [11] early in the Christian era and to have established themselves, by reason of their literacy and supposedly superior ritual knowledge, as religious leaders over the already established
565 population. In the traditional period, they were
631 throughout Kerala important landowners and priests, in charge of most of the temples and public rituals. They ranked ritually above the kings and were above and outside the political systems of the several kingdoms. Alone of all the castes, they moved freely unmolested between enemy kingdoms, married across the boundaries, held periodic ceremonies and feasts attended by their caste-members from all parts of Kerala, and carried on their separate system
565 of intra-caste administration independently of the
631 administration of justice within the kingdoms.
623 For the latter purpose they divided out Kerala

565 into 64 gramams (caste areas), within each of
631 which a Nambudiri assembly composed of the
623 oldest members of the patrilineal extended families
of the area met periodically to arrange public
ceremonies and tried cases of offence against
caste laws. Within each gramam, the Nambudiris
[564] were divided into ranked subcastes according
to their wealth and ritual functions; these,
565 however, need not concern us here. Over the
631 whole area, a dignitary known as the Aravancheri
693 Tamburakkal, [12] who resided in Travancore,
was universally acknowledged as the ritual
and administrative leader of the Nambudiris.
This high priest was accorded the right to crown
the kings of both Calicut and Cochin, though
these rulers were traditionally at enmity. His
jurisdiction in matters of the religious law governing
social relations between castes, was
acknowledged throughout the area. The field of
social relations of the Nambudiris was thus the
whole of Kerala.

565 The ritual prestige of Nambudiris was supported
596 by their wealth: each patrilineal extended
family owned the land in at least one village, and
in addition local groups of family heads managed
lands owned by important Brahman temples in
each kingdom. The Nambudiris had a patrilineal
[611] descent system of a peculiar type described below.

565 Below the Nambudiris in ritual rank came the
613 royal matrilineal lineages of Calicut, Walluva-
631 nad and Cochin. Though undoubtedly Nayar in
origin and general culture, each of these lineages
considered itself superior in ritual rank to its

613 in kind, from which was deducted a small pro-
621 portion of the original cash sum. When the ori-
427 ginal sum had been exhausted the kanakkaran
566 recommenced paying full rent, or renewed the sum, or else surrendered the land. It seems likely that these sums [19] of money were traditionally paid only on the succession to headship of a new janmi or a new kanakkaran on the death of the old, or at irregular intervals convenient to both parties. Both kanam and jenmam rights could be sold, but a kanakkaran could not be evicted without the consent of the local Nayar assembly. The system allowed of a certain degree of spatial mobility and of the periodic segmentation of the Nayar property-group, some branches of which might even move to another village if lands became short. On the whole, however, kanam tenures were of long duration, and a Nayar property-group might remain stable for several generations.

566 In addition to their role as tenants, members of the retainer subcastes had other economic and also ritual relations with their landlord.
[994] They were called adiyar (servants) of their janmi and must attend and participate at his household ceremonies. Women of the retainer lin-
[357] eages worked as house-servants of the janmi's family, while older Nayar men who had retired
[427] from the army might be employed as bailiffs who collected the janmi's rents and organized the labour of his serfs.

564 In addition to the Nayars, members of certain
794 other aristocratic castes were usually present in each village. These included the temple

564 servants, nowadays [20] collectively called Ambalavasis.
144 The highest of these were the Chakkyars
or reciters of Puranic stories, and the
Pushpagans or flower-gatherers for temples.
[611] These two castes had a patrilineal descent-system
of the same type as Nambudiris, and are
said to have once been Nambudiris who were
degraded for ritual offences. They ranked below
Nambudiris and above Nayars and the matrilineal
temple servant castes. These latter included
[533] Nambyars, a small caste whose work was
to accompany Chakkyar recitations on a metal
drum; Psharodis and Variyars, both of whom
traditionally sweep the temple, clean temple
vessels and make garlands for the idols; Puduvals
or drummers on a drum called maddalam;
and Marars or regular drummers on another
drum called chenda.

The temple-servant castes were small and
were chiefly congregated in villages owned by
Nambudiri landlords or by large temples. Four
main types of temple were owned by the higher
castes of Malabar. First came large and wealthy
temples owned and managed entirely by
groups of Nambudiri landlords and dedicated to
one of the orthodox Brahmanical male deities of
India, usually Siva or Vishnu. Second came the
private temple of each individual Nambudiri family
in villages owned by Nambudiris; these were
small replicas of the first type, dedicated to the
same types of deities. Third came the large
temples, one of which was associated with each
[776] royal and chiefly matrilineage. These were
usually dedicated to Bhagavadi or Bhadrakali,
the Nayar goddess of war, smallpox and the soil.

794 the Nayar goddess of war, smallpox and the 564 soil. Fourth came the smaller Bhagavadi temples of village Nayars, one of which was found in each village or group of villages of the same subcaste where Nayar retainers were present. [782] In the first two types of temples, animal sacrifice was forbidden; offerings were of flowers, fruits, incense and fire. The priests were [793] either Nambudiri Brahmans or members of a lower landless caste called Embrandiri Brahmans who are immigrant from South Canara to the north. Nayars might enter the outer courtyards of such temples but might not perform rites there. In a village which contained a temple of type (1), there was often no Nayar population at all: a group of lineages of one or more temple servant subcastes replaced them as retainers of the Nambudiris and as kanam tenants. In Nambudiri villages containing a temple of type (2), there would be one or two individual lineages of one or other temple servant caste, attached to the Nambudiri temple, but also a group of Nayar retainers with their own Bhagavadi temple. [22] In villages not headed by Nambudiri Brahmans, there might be only a Bhagavadi temple, managed collectively by Nayars. One lineage of the Marar caste might also be present to drum in the temple, but the other temple servant castes did not work in village Bhagavadi temples. Similarly in a royal or chiefly village containing a large Bhagavadi temple owned by the ruling lineage, the temple servant castes might be absent except for one lineage of Marars, but individuals of the

564/ other temple servant castes might come from 774/ other villages to assist at special annual ceremonies. In royal and chiefly Bhagavadi temples the priest was usually a Nambudiri Brahman, [788] though a Nayar shaman was attached to the temple and periodically became possessed by the goddess and declared her will to the people. In village Nayar Bhagavadi temples, the priest [793] was either an Embrandiri Brahman hired by the Nayars, or a Nayar; there was in addition a Nayar shaman. Daily rites in the Bhagavadi [782] temple were similar to those in a Nambudiri temple, but annual ceremonies involved animal sacrifice by Nayars, in which Brahmans and temple servants took no part. Consistent with [252] these differences in ritual behaviour, Nambudiris and all temple servants were vegetarians; royal, chiefly and Nayar castes ate meat. The matrilineal castes of temple servants were otherwise almost identical in general culture to Nayars, and historically were probably once Nayars. Among temple servants, Nambyars, Psharodis, Variyars and Puduvals disputed for ritual rank and would not interdine or intermarry. They ranked roughly [23] parallel to the chiefs of districts (with whom they had few social relations and did not interdine) and above the retainer-Nayars, who might receive food from them but not give food to them. Marars ranked below the other temple servant castes and parallel to Nayars, with whom they had few social relations outside the temple, and did not interdine or intermarry.

Below all these aristocratic castes in ritual

564 rank came certain small castes of middle class,
794 non-military Nayars whose work was connected
with temples. Vattekads were oil-mongers for
temples, Odatt Nayars, temple tile-makers;
and Andura Nayars temple pot-makers. One
Vattekad lineage was present in each village to
supply oil to the temple; its members might receive good from all the higher castes but might
not give to them. Often, the headman of the
Vattekad lineage was also the shaman of the Na-
[791] yar Bhagavadi temple. Odatt and Andura Nayars
were very small castes, usually with one lineage
to about six villages.

564 Below the middle class Nayars in rank came
three castes of servant-Nayars, also non-mili-
[764] tary: Chidigans or funeral priests of the higher
matrilineal castes, Veluthedans or washermen
[305] of all the castes above them; and Vilakkatara-
[296] vans or barbers of all the castes above them.
One lineage of each of these castes was usually
present in each village. Chidigans ranked above
barbers and washermen, who disputed for rank
and would not interdine or intermarry.

[341] In each village, all of the castes so far men-
tioned (provided they were present) were called
"high," "good" [24] or "clean" castes and lived
in a separate portion of the village, each house
in its own large garden, round the temples and
the local janmi's house. Except for Nayar barbers and washermen, all might enter either Nam-
budiri or Nayar temples. Within this group,
[783] lower castes were forbidden to touch higher
castes because of ritual pollution, but individuals
of different castes might approach each other
within a few feet.

564 within a few feet. Equal interdining took place
[264] only between members of the same caste or sub-
caste, but at a higher caste feast members of
lower castes might receive food from higher
caste hosts. The Nambudiris, royalty, chiefs,
temple servants, retainers, middle-class and
servant Nayars thus collectively formed the
"good" castes of the society. Nambudiris and
[611] two small castes of their temple servants were
patrilineal; all the rest were matrilineal. (1)

[361] Below all these castes, living in a separate
part of the village, were the "low" or "pollut-
[783] ing" castes. These included in order of rank,
Iravas or toddy-tappers and tenant-farmers, with
20 to 50 households per village; Kanisans (as-
trologers) with one to three households per vil-
lage; the artisan castes (blacksmiths, gold-
smiths, carpenters, bell-metal workers and
stone-masons, who ranked equally) each with one
to three houses per village; low caste washermen
and barbers (who ranked equally) each with one
to five houses per village; and bow-makers, each
with about one to ten houses per village. Iravas,
[611] Kanisans, washermen and barbers had double
[595] unilineal descent: [25] patrilineal, patrilocal ex-
[614] tended families with fraternal polyandrv, cross-
cut by large exogamous dispersed matrilineal
clans. Artisans and bow-makers had patrilineal
descent with patrilocal extended families and
[437] fraternal polyandry. All of these castes worked
for each other and for the "good" castes of the
524 village. Iravas, the most numerous and influen-
427 tial, owned their own house-sites and leased rice-
lands and other garden lands from the matrilineal

564 kanam tenants of the village, on a triennial tenure
427 (verum-pattam) retaining about one-fifth of
the produce for their own sustenance and paying
564 the rest as rent in kind. One or more small
437 patrilineal groups of each of the other castes had
what was called a desam avakasam or "village
right," namely the right to work exclusively for
members of their natal village. Sometimes, in
the case of small castes such as astrologers and
barbers, the right might extend to several adjacent
villages who collectively shared the labour
of one servant family. Avakasams were hereditary
in patrilineal groups; they involved payment
in paddy and vegetables by each patron household,
of whatever caste, after the two harvests
of the year, and the right to take part in village
festivals and be fed at higher caste festivals and
marriages.

[791] Astrologers and artisans were hired by all the
higher castes of the village, by each other and
[305] by Iravas who ranked above them. Barbers
worked for all the lower polluting castes of this
group, but not for the "good" castes who employed
[296] the Nayar barber. Washermen laundered
for all the lower polluting castes but not regularly
for the "good" castes, who employed the Nayar
washerman; however, the low [26] caste washerman's
lineage must provide clean cloths for the
"good" castes after death, menstruation and
childbirth and had ritual obligations to high
caste women on the two latter occasions. Bowmakers
564 served Nayars and Iravas. Each of the
783 lower polluting castes was endogamous and interdined
equally only within the caste. Rules of

564 ritual pollution decreed that the several lower
783 castes might not touch each other, and that members of each lower caste, according to their ritual rank, must refrain from approaching members of the "good" castes within distance ranging from 15 to 40 feet.

564 Finally, on the outskirts of the village, in a
[361] separate area, lived the serf-castes of Parayas
437 and Pulayas. Parayas were a small caste of basket and umbrella-makers; in each village two or three households had a village right to serve all castes above them. Pulayas were until 1850 the agricultural serfs of Nayars, temple-servants and Nambudiris. Each property-group of these castes owned one or more families of Pulayas as its ancestral property who could be bought and sold. Food, household materials and clothing were provided for serfs by their owners. The Pulayas were freed by law in 1850, since when they have been landless agricultural labourers serving the "good" castes and Iravas for daily
[783] wages in kind. As "exterior" castes, Parayas and Pulayas may not approach "good" castes within a distance of about 60 feet and may not enter the "good" area of the village or walk on the main roads. (These rules were however abolished by law at Independence in 1947.) [27] Each caste is endogamous and the two may not
[611] interdine. Unlike the higher castes they have a bilateral kinship system without unilineal descent groups. In addition to these Hindu castes
361 there were and are in Kerala large groups of
563 Muslims and Christians. (2) Christians had their separate villages and were divided into castes in a similar manner to Hindus. Muslims

361 lived in bazaar streets in the towns, or some-
363 times in separate villages, where they were
served by low caste Hindu labourers; alterna-
tively small groups of them might occupy Hindu
villages where they had the ritual rank of Iravas
(from whom they were chiefly converted), and
usually held lands on the same terms of triennial
tenure from Nayar kanakker.

● 24 The lower polluting castes and the exterior
783 castes had their own small temples, dedicated
to their own deities. They were forbidden to
approach the temples of the "good" castes and
564 might not take part in daily worship there. An-
796 nually, however, a large temple festival was
571 held in each Nayar, chiefly or royal Bhagavadi
temple. At such a festival, representatives of all the lower castes of the village attended and performed ceremonies and dances peculiar to their caste at approriate distances from the temple. Such festivals apparently reinforced the mutual rights and obligations of the several castes and dramatized the solidarity and also the social distance between them. In accordance with the normal range of their social relations, members of the lower castes usually attended such festivals only in their own or adjacent villages. At the festivals of the chiefly temple of the nad, however, members of "good" castes throughout the nad were required to participate; similarly, at festivals of the royal temples, representatives of the "good" castes throughout the kingdom were called to attend and express their allegiance to the ruler and his deity.

631 cases were carried voluntarily by low caste
692 disputants of different castes to the Nayar assembly,
681 but this might also step in by forces in disputes which threatened the peace of the village. Punishments included beatings and fines
[564] to the temple. However, Nayars and Nambudiris had also the power of life and death over their serfs and might have these killed without recourse to a higher authority. Any Nayar had, for example, the right to spear at sight a Pulaya who accidentally touched him, refused to recede from his approach, or insulted a Nayar woman.

681 In the castes above the serfs, grave crimes
692 were carried to the court of the king. Murder, sacrilege, the wounding of a cow or of a Brahman, and theft from a man of "good" caste, were punishable by death. Brahmans and women, however, were never officially put to death. Brahmans were excommunicated by their own assemblies, women were sold into slavery with the Arabs. If, however, a Nayar woman fornicated with a man of lower caste (an offence legally punishable by excommunication and slavery) it is recorded that in fact her own brothers, with the tacit consent of [35] the ruler, would themselves spear her to death. The death sentence for men of the polluting castes was impalement, for Nayars, spearing, and for Muslims, hanging. Unsolved civil disputes between high caste men and Muslims were tried in the royal court by ordeal, usually of boiling oil.

564 It is interesting to notice that the higher the
571 caste, the wider the field of social relations.
631 For the serfs and lower polluting castes, this

564 571 631 was confined to the village or (in the case of the smaller castes) a group of adjacent villages. For retainer-Nayars, apart from their excursions in war, it was confined to the group of adjacent villages of one subcaste; for temple servants and Nayar village headmen, the nad; for naduvaris and kings, the kingdom; and for Nambudiris, Kerala. It may be hypothesized that this variation in the field of social relations of the different ranked orders of the society is intrinsic in any feudal system with centralized political institutions.

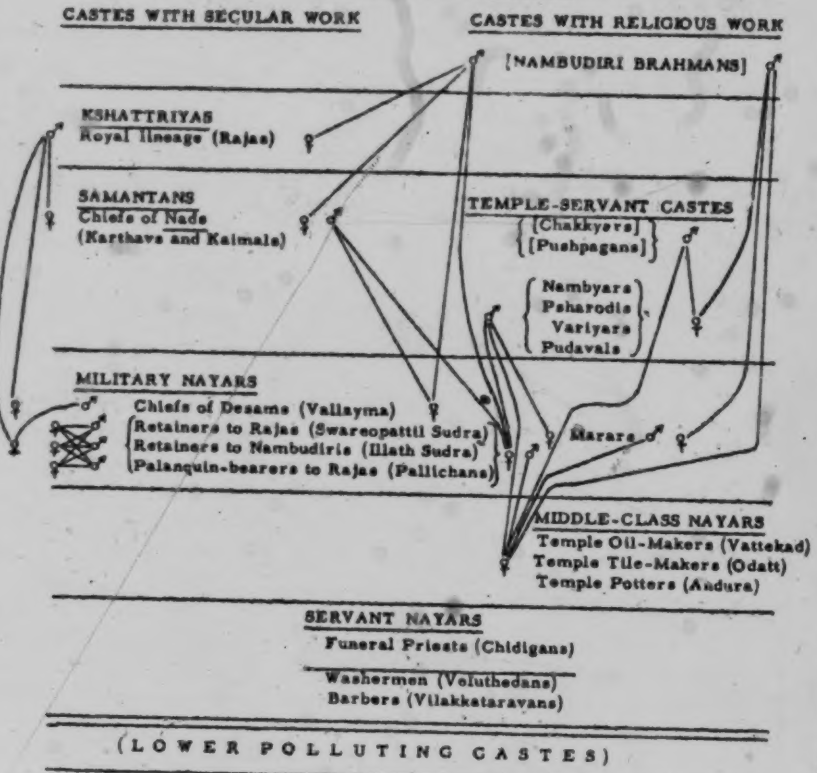
582 (4) Hypergamy in the Upper Castes

611 Each of the castes below middle class Nayars was endogamous, as is usually in the caste system throughout India. But among the higher "clean" castes, a complicated system of hypergamous unions linked the several groups. By hypergamy I mean the union of a man of higher caste with a woman of lower caste.

582 611 In discussing hypergamy, it is necessary first to explain the descent-system of Nambudiris.
596 In the patrilineal [36] extended family of Nambudiris, only the eldest son was permitted to marry, with Vedic rites, within his own caste and beget children for his family. Younger sons
[595] had recognized liaisons (not initiated with Vedic rites and regarded by Nambudiris not as marriage but as concubinage) with women of the matrilineal castes, whose children belonged to the mother's caste and lineage by matrilineal descent. However, if in any generation the eldest Nambudiri son was was sterile, the second son

582
524

CHART I RITUAL RANKING AND HYPERGAMOUS UNIONS BETWEEN THE HIGHER CASTES OF COCHIN


CASTES WITH SECULAR WORK
CASTES WITH RELIGIOUS WORK
[NAMBUDIRI BRAHMANS]
KSHATTRIYAS
Royal lineage (Rajas)
SAMANTANS
Chiefs of Nade
(Karthavs and Kaimals)
TEMPLE-SERVANT CASTES
[Chakkyars]
[Pushpagans]
Nambyars
Psharodis
Variyars
Pudavals
MILITARY NAYARS
Chiefs of Desams (Vallayma)
Retainers to Rajas (Swareopattil Sudra)
Retainers to Nambudiris (Illath Sudra)
Palanquin-bearers to Rajas (Pallichans)
Marars
MIDDLE-CLASS NAYARS
Temple Oil-Makers (Vattekad)
Temple Tile-Makers (Odatt)
Temple Potters (Andura)
SERVANT NAYARS
Funeral Priests (Chidigans)
Washermen (Voluthedans)
Barbers (Vilakkataravans)
(LOWER POLLUTING CASTES)

Key

} indicates equivalence of, or dispute for, rank.

A line drawn across the page indicates that all castes above it rank unequivocally above all castes below it.

Oblique lines and curves indicate some amount of hypergamous mating between the castes.

♂ -male ♀ -female

Castes shown in brackets have patrilineal descent; all others have matrilineal descent.

6 — *Kathleen Gough*

Nayar: Central Kerala

191 The Nayars, unlike the groups so far described, form only a part-
564 society—a named category of castes within the social system of south-
[121] west India. An account of their kinship system therefore requires a
sketch of the political and economic system in which they were embedded. It seems to have been the Nayars' role as a specialized occupational group within a complex society which accounted for the most unusual features of their kinship institutions.

101 The Nayars differ also from the other groups considered with re-
564 gard to their relatively high level of technological development. At
463 least from the first century A.D., Kerala's social structure was based
241 upon plough agriculture with irrigation, specialized crafts, and over-
433 seas trade (K. M. Panikkar, 1945: 36). Productivity was sufficiently
[439] high so that more than one-quarter of the population could be ex-
empted from manual labor and set apart as specialist, literate groups engaged in religion, government, warfare, and wholesale trade. The
[162] Nayars, as the ruling and military castes, formed the core of this
aristocracy and probably comprised between one-quarter and one-fifth of the total population.[1]

611 Partly as a result of direct legal changes brought about since the
178 British conquest of 1792, and, more deeply, as a result of the change
177 to an industrial fuel technology, the Nayar system of matrilineal
groups has been gradually disintegrating over the past hundred years. Some of the traditional functions of these matrilineal units are being taken over by the elementary family and by the wider, personal, bilateral kindred of each individual. Other former functions of matri-
lineal groups have passed to such modern bureaucratic institutions as
121 government, army, law court, and school. Because this book is a com-
611 parative study of matrilineal systems, I shall concentrate on Nayar
lineages and kinship in the "traditional" period before the British

---

[161] [1] Buchanan estimated the population density of Central Kerala at 100 per square mile in 1800 (1807, II: 501). The density for Cochin State was 814 per square mile in 1931 (Census of India, Cochin State, 1931).

Pandya, appears to have grown powerful on the basis of trade with 175
Rome. Like Chola and Pandya, it was a Tamil kingdom; Malayalam, [439]
the modern language of Kerala, did not diverge from Tamil until [197]
about the tenth century (Sastri, 1955: 400). It is clear from the Tamil
literature of the Sangam period that the basic features of Kerala's [174]
division of labor, caste system and village organization, must have developed during or before the Chera period (*ibid.*: 110–140). The three South Indian kingdoms temporarily disintegrated in the late third century, probably as a result of a sharp decline in Roman trade.

There is no mention of any matrilineal caste like the Nayars in the 174
Chera kingdom. When and whence they came is uncertain. The most 101
plausible suggestion is that during the Chera period they were a matrilineal 564
hill tribe occupying the Ghats under chiefs who owed a tenuous allegiance to the Chera kings. They may have descended to the Kerala plains as invading barbarians about the fourth century, when the Chera kingdom collapsed (Ayyar, 1938: 43). Little is known of Kerala between the Chera period and the thirteenth century. All or a part of it passed under the rule of a succession of viceroys (Perumals) from various South Indian kingdoms to the east of the Ghats. The date of the last Perumal is quite uncertain. Many writers concur in placing him in the early ninth century, but he may possibly have lived
as late as the thirteenth. Nayar chiefs and Nayar soldiers are first 175
mentioned in three copperplate inscriptions, tentatively dated late 701
seventh, mid-eighth, and early ninth centuries. The inscriptions record 648
grants of land and judicial privileges on the coast to settlements of Jewish and Syrian Christian traders (Logan, 1887, I: 265). The grants were made by rulers of Kerala, presumably Perumals, and were witnessed by Nayar chiefs of Venad, Ernad, Walluvanad, and Palghat. All these districts were famous Nayar chiefdoms in the later periods and persisted until the eighteenth century. The plates suggest that Nayar chiefs with private armies had emerged as vassals of the Perumals at least by the ninth century. By the mid-thirteenth century, at the latest, the greater Nayar chiefs had become independent small kings, and the Perumals had disappeared.

Chinese had resumed trade with Kerala sometime in the Perumal 175
period, and in the thirteenth century this trade greatly expanded under 439
the empire of Kubla Khan. Concomitantly, two coastal Nayar 635
chiefdoms with strategic ports expanded into small kingdoms by conquering the surrounding inland chiefdoms and monopolizing their trade. In the north was the Kolattiri kingdom centered about Mount Eli, and in the south the kingdom of Travancore or Venad, centered

dependence of India in 1947. Cochin and Travancore were amalgamated 175
in 1949 and, under popular pressure for the formation of linguistic 648
states, the whole area was reunited as the State of Kerala in 635
1956. This state elected a Communist government in 1957.

After 1498 there were certain changes in Kerala's economy. Trade [177]
and towns expanded, gunpowder was introduced and wars became [436]
more devastating, and cash transactions became more prevalent [564]
among the aristocratic castes in villages (K. M. Panikkar, 1929: chap. [631]
XIV). But the basic form of the caste system and the pyramidal system of kingdoms, subordinate chiefdoms, and villages persisted with little change until after the Mysorean conquest. The Calicut kingdom gradually declined after 1498, for the Portuguese allied themselves with the small kingdom of Cochin to the south, freed it from Calicut's overlordship, and used it as a base from which to expel the Arabs and subdue the Zamorins. Nevertheless, with fluctuating boundaries Calicut remained the most powerful kingdom until the 1730's.

Although its internal political boundaries have shifted continually, 631
Kerala is today still divisible into three major cultural areas. These 635
are distinguished by differences in the names and numbers of the 184
castes who occupy them, in dress, dietetic habits and ritual practices, and in the kinship systems of the several Hindu castes. The northern area, north of the Kora River, comprises the former kingdoms of Nileswaram, Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad. This was the area dominated by the Kolattiri kings in the fourteenth century and at various periods thereafter. In British times it became the northern part of Malabar District and the southern part of South Canara District; I shall call it North Kerala. The central area comprises the former kingdoms of Calicut, Walluvanad, Palghat, and Cochin. It was overrun by the Zamorins of Calicut at various times between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. In British times it formed South Malabar District and Cochin State; I shall refer to it as Central Kerala. All the southern area (until recently, Travancore State) was at one
time or another subordinate to the kings of Travancore. The political [564]
systems—and consequently the internal caste divisions of the Nayars and the forms of their kinship systems—differed in these three areas. Much confusion has arisen in the past because of failure to distinguish
between the three regions. It has been assumed that the Nayars had [601]
one kinship system, whereas in fact they had three, with different
terminological structures. In this paper I describe Nayar kinship in [121]
two kingdoms of Central Kerala: Calicut and Cochin.

Caste and Territorial Divisions

THE HIGH CASTES

564 *The Nambudiri Brahmans* Throughout Kerala the Nambudiri Brahmans were the highest Hindu caste and the ritual and scholastic leaders. [162] Today they form one hundredth of the population (Censuses of Madras, Cochin, and Travancore, 1931). Carriers of the Sanskrit language [174] and of ancient Vedic culture, they are thought to have entered Malabar from the eastern plateau sometime after the fall of the Chera
564 kingdom (Logan, 1951, I: 121, 243; Ayyar, 1938: 47). Most Nambudiris were landlords of substance, but they included a number of
463 ranked occupational sub-castes of varying wealth. The greater landlords were managers of large temples, promulgators of religious law, legal advisers of the kings, priests of public sacrifices, or philosophers and Vedic scholars. The lower sub-castes, whose members owned smaller estates, included temple priests, physicians, and household priests and professional cooks who officiated at ceremonies in the Nayar castes.

564 The Nambudiris ranked ritually above the kings and were to some extent above and outside the political systems of the kingdoms. Alone of all the castes, they moved unmolested between enemy kingdoms. They held ceremonies attended by their caste fellows from all parts of Kerala and carried on their system of intra-caste administration independently of the administration of justice within the kingdoms. For the latter purpose they divided Kerala into *gramams* (caste areas) (Logan, 1951, I: 120). Over the whole region a dignitary called the Aravancheri Tamburakkal, who lived in the Calicut kingdom, was universally acknowledged as the ritual and administrative leader of the Nambudiris (Buchanan, 1807: 423–426; Ayyar, 1938: 23). He held the right to install the kings of both Calicut and Cochin, even though these rulers were traditionally at enmity. The field of social relations of the Nambudiris was thus the whole of Kerala and they played a [611] role not dissimilar to that of the medieval Catholic church. Descent among the Nambudiris was patrilineal.

564 *The High-Caste Nayars* Below the Nambudiri Brahmans in ritual
613 rank came the royal *matrilineages* of the several kingdoms. Those in
635 Central Kerala were Calicut, Walluvanad, Palghat, and Cochin. Although of Nayar origin, each of these lineages considered itself superior in ritual rank to the Nayar subjects within its kingdom. Between kingdoms, royal lineages disputed for rank and would not intermarry. Although exogamous, therefore, each royal lineage considered

itself a separate caste. The Cochin lineage claimed descent from the 564
Perumals and ranked as Kshattriyas, the second of the four divisions of 613
all-India Hindu society. The Walluvanad, Palghat, and Calicut lineages, 635
once vassals of the Perumals, were not strictly recognized as Kshattriyas in Brahmin theory and held the title of Samantans. Normally, the oldest man in each royal lineage held the kingship and administered customary law with assistance from Brahman advisers.

Each kingdom was divided into *nāds* (chiefdoms or districts). In 634
the Zamorin's kingdom at the height of its power some of these chiefdoms
had once been independent small kingdoms. They were conquered 613
by Calicut in the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. 554
They continued to be ruled by their traditional monarchs, who paid tribute to Calicut. Among them were the chiefdoms of Beypore, Chaliyam, Parappanad, Bettem, and Punnattur. Each of these ruling lineages, although feudatory, retained a higher ritual rank than the Zamorin by virtue of its more ancient tradition of government. Similarly, some chiefdoms of the Cochin kingdom were governed by conquered feudatory rulers of higher ritual rank than the royal lineage. The small kingdoms of Walluvanad and Palghat, however, had no feudatories of higher rank than their royal lineages.

The other chiefdoms of a kingdom were ruled by hereditary Nayar chiefs (*nāduvaḻis*) originally appointed by the king, and these chiefs had more restricted powers than the feudatory monarchs. Most of them held the title of Samantan, but all were considered of lower ritual rank than their royal lineages. The Zamorin's kingdom (the largest) appears to have had twenty-eight such district chiefs in the
fifteenth century. Each chiefly lineage, like each royal lineage, tended [564]
to regard itself as a separate caste acknowledging no peers. [613]

Each chiefdom was divided into *dēsams* or villages. A village seems 634
to have covered anything from one to four square miles, comprising 621
both dry garden land and flats of alluvial rice land. Most of the land 471
in each village was normally owned by one landlord family of higher ritual rank than the other occupants.

In some villages the land was owned by a Nambudiri patrilineal 621
extended family, whose large house occupied a central position. In 564
others it was owned by one or other branch of the royal lineage as
part of the royal domain. There would then be a palace in the village 471
and the senior prince of the household would act as village headman. 613
In other villages the land was owned by the chiefly matrilineage of [622]
the district, whether this lineage were of feudatory royal rank or of vassal Samantan rank. Again in this case the chiefly family would live

621 in a small palace and the head of it would fulfil the roles both of
564 chief and of village headman. In other villages the land formed part
471 of the estate of some large temple. These estates, called *sankētams*,
613 were managed by assemblies of Nambudiris who held complete judicial rights over the lower-caste population. Finally, in yet other vil-
[622] lages the land was owned by the matrilineage of a hereditary Nayar village headman (*dēsavari*) originally appointed by the king or by the chief of the district. The Nayar village headmen were drawn from castes ritually lower than those of their district chiefs. In Walluvaned and Calicut village headmen were usually drawn from the Kiriattil Nayar caste. The corresponding caste in Cochin was called Vellayma Nayars.

The landowning families in all of these villages were called *jenmis*. The eldest man of the extended family, whether patrilineal or matrilineal, had legal guardianship of his own family and, in another sense, of the village lands and inhabitants. He sanctioned marriages in all the castes, managed the land devoted to village temples, and paid the temple servants from its produce. A landlord family could not sell its land without the consent of the king and it usually remained on its site over many generations.

621 Villages were classifiable therefore as Brahman, temple, royal,
564 chiefly, and Nayar headmen's villages. In some areas a group of villages of the same type might be adjacent to one another. In each village, subordinate to the landlord in ritual rank and administrative
[178] power, lived members of one or other caste of Nayar retainers or vassals. In modern times these castes have tended to combine as a single caste of "high-class Nayars," so that their former roles are difficult to determine. So far as I could discover they were as follows.

564 First, a caste called Kiriattil Nayars in Calicut and Vellayma Nayars
[622] in Cochin. Most village headmen's lineages were originally drawn from this caste, but after they had assumed office these lineages iso-
[613] lated themselves as a separate sub-caste of higher rank than ordinary Kiriattils. Ordinary Kiriattils appear to have been usually retainers in villages commanded by Nayar village headmen.

Second, a caste called Purattu Charna Nayars ("outdoor retainers") in Calicut. Its members usually lived in villages owned by a district
[701] chief or by the royal lineage. A special, higher-ranking subdivision of the caste called Pariccha Menons ("leaders of the shield") formed the Zamorin's private army and lived on royal land near Calicut.

Third, a caste called Agattu Charna Nayars ("indoor retainers") in Calicut. They also seem to have lived mainly in royal or chiefly vil-

lages. The men were often clerks in the palaces. In Cochin, castes 564
two and three were amalgamated and were called Swarupattil Sudra
Nayars or "palace servants."

Fourth, a caste called Pallichan Nayars, both in Calicut and Cochin. Its members also were vassals in the villages of royalty, chiefs, and of the greater Brahmans. The men were often palanquin bearers as well as soldiers.

Fifth, a caste called Sudra Nayars in Calicut and Illath ("Brahman house") Sudras in Cochin. The members lived in villages owned by Brahman families or on the estates of Brahmanical temples.

The mutual ritual ranking of these five castes seems to have varied 564
in different districts. In some districts they ranked in the order given, 554
and men of a higher caste might marry women of a lower caste;
the reverse was in theory forbidden. In other districts the castes seem
to have disputed for precedence and not to have regularly intermarried.
In most areas the five castes occupied different villages or different [628]
sections of large villages, seem to have had little communication
in peacetime, and did not normally interdine. In war, however, [726]
soldiers of these different castes interdined freely and spent the night
in each others' homes. It is possible that sexual restrictions between
these castes were also relaxed in war, but this point is uncertain.

In each village there were normally some four to seven matrilineages 621
of the appropriate retainer caste. The separate households or property 613
groups within each lineage had the hereditary right, granted by the 564
king, to occupy stretches of garden land and to lease large plots of wet 566
paddy land on long-term tenure from the village landlord. The tenure 471
was called *kānam;* the tenant, *a kānakkaran.* In most villages the men of 427
retainer lineages also owed military service to their landlord, ultimately
on behalf of the king. (The military organization is discussed below.)
Retainers were called *adiyar,* a word equivalent to "vassals," of their
landlord. They participated in his household ceremonies and often
waited upon him. Women of retainer lineages could be summoned as
serving maids in the landlord's family; men, as bailiffs to collect the
landlord's rents and organize the labor of his serfs.

The Temple-Servant Castes In addition to the Nayars, other aristocratic 564
castes often lived in a village. These were the temple servants, 794
nowadays collectively called Ambalavasis. They are relevant to our
discussion because they sometimes married Nayar women. The highest
of these castes were the Chakkyars (or reciters of Puranic stories)
and the Pushpagans (or flower gatherers for temples), which had
patrilineal descent systems of the same type as the Nambudiris. They

564 794 ranked below Nambudiris but above retainer Nayars and certain matrilineal temple-servant castes. The latter included Nambyars, Puduvals, and Marars, three castes of drummers, and Psharodis and Variyars, castes of temple stewards.

564 794 The temple-servant castes were small and lived chiefly in villages owned by Nambudiri Brahmans or in sankētams. Four types of temples were distinguishable among the higher castes. First were the large temples of the sankētams, whose estates were managed by Nambudiris. They were dedicated to all-India, Puranic deities, usually Siva or Vishnu. Second, were the private temples of individual Nambudiri families in villages owned by Nambudiris, which were small replicas of the first type. Third were the private temples of royal and chiefly matrilineages, dedicated to Bhagavadi or Bhadrakali—the Nayar goddess of war, epidemic, land, and fertility. Fourth were the smaller Bhagavadi temples of village Nayars, each collectively managed by an assembly of Nayar retainers of one or more villages.

In the first two types of temple animal sacrifice was forbidden. [782] [793] Offerings were of fruit, flowers, incense, and fire. The priests were low-ranking Nambudiri Brahmans. Nayars might enter the outer courtyards of such temples but might not perform rites there. In a village which formed part of a sankētam there was sometimes no Nayar population at all; a group of lineages of one or more temple-servant castes replaced them as retainers of the Brahmans and as per-[613] manent tenants. In Nambudiri villages containing a temple of the second type, one or two lineages of some temple-servant caste would be attached to the temple, but there would invariably also be a group of Sudra Nayar retainers with their own Bhagavadi temple.

564 794 613 In villages under a Nayar headman there might be only one Bhagavadi temple managed collectively by Nayars. One lineage of the Marar caste might be present to drum in the temple, but the other temple-servant castes did not work in Nayar village temples. Similarly, in a royal or chiefly village containing a large Bhagavadi temple of the ruling lineage, the temple-servant castes might be absent except for one lineage of Marars. Persons of other temple-servant castes might however come from nearby villages to assist at special ceremonies.

794 564 [793] [791] [782] In Bhagavadi temples the regular priest was usually of a special low subdivision of Nambudiris (Adigals). In addition a Nayar shaman, attached to the temple, periodically became possessed by the goddess and declared her will to the people. Daily rites in the Bhagavadi temple were similar to those in a Brahman temple, but annual festi-

794

vals involved animal sacrifice by Nayars in which Brahmans and tem- 564
ple servants took no part. [782]

Consistent with these differences in ritual practice, Nambudiris and
temple servants were vegetarians and followed rules of non-violence.
Royals, chiefs, and Nayar retainers were warriors and until modern [262]
times usually ate meat and drank liquor. The matrilineal castes of
temple servants were otherwise culturally similar to Nayars, with [613]
whom they probably had a common origin.

Below the Chakkyars and the Pushpagans, the Nambyars, Psharodis, 564
Variyars, and Puduvals disputed for ritual rank and would not interdine. These castes ranked roughly parallel to the district chiefs, with whom they had few social relations and did not interdine. They ranked above the retainer Nayars, who might receive food from them but might not give to them. Marars ranked below the other temple servants and parallel to retainer Nayars, with whom, however, they had few social relations outside the temple and did not interdine.

The Nayar Menials in Temples Below all these aristocratic castes 564
came certain small matrilineal castes of menial, non-military Nayars 794
whose work was largely connected with temples. Vattekad Nayars [613]
were oilmongers; Odatt Nayars, tile makers; Andura Nayars, temple potters. One Vattekad lineage was present in every village to supply oil for temple lamps. Often the headman of the Vattekad lineage was the shaman of the Nayar Bhagavadi temple. Vattekad Nayars also performed household tasks for Kiriattil Nayar village headmen, which ordinary Kiriattil Nayars were too proud to do. Odatt and Andura Nayars were very small castes,[8] and one lineage might serve six or eight villages.

The Nayar Servant Castes Below the temple menials came three 564
matrilineal castes of servant Nayars with "degrading" occupations. 613
Chidigans (called Attikurssis in the Calicut kingdom) were funeral priests of the higher matrilineal castes. Veluttedans were washermen of all the castes above them and Vilakkataravans were barbers of all the castes above them. One lineage of each was usually present in a village. Funeral priests ranked above barbers and washermen, who disputed for rank and would not interdine.

Social Relations among the Higher Castes The castes so far men- 564

---

[8] The kings permitted only Brahmans, royalty, and the greater chiefs to roof their [643]
houses and temples with tiles. Tile making was therefore a minor craft, and temple
pottery was of superior quality to that used by commoners. The ordinary polluting [333]
caste of potters, Kumbarans, camped outside villages and exchanged their wares [323]
for grain.

564 tioned were called "high," "good," or "clean" castes. They lived in
[361] a separate portion of the village around the temples and the land-
lord's establishment; with each house in its own fenced garden. Ex-
cept for the servant Nayars all might enter either Brahman or Nayar
temples. Within this group, lower castes were forbidden to touch
higher castes because of rules of ritual pollution, but individuals of
different castes might approach each other within a few feet. Equal
interdining took place only between caste fellows, but members of
lower castes might *receive* food from higher-caste hosts. In ritual
terms these castes thus formed the upper ranks of society, although
only the Nayar retainers and those above them were economically
and socially aristocrats. Nambudiris and two small castes of their
temple servants were patrilineal; all the rest were matrilineal.

101 I have designated as "Nayars" all the castes which bear this title
121 today. They are not a unitary group but a named category of castes.
564 Traditionally, the title Nayar seems not to have been extended to
all these castes. Before 1498 the military Nayars or retainer Nayars
were called Lokar (Ayyar, 1938: 32). What the other matrilineal
castes were called is not known. "Nayar" was not then a caste name
[703] but a title conferred by the king on lineages whose members had won
special military honor. The Portuguese called all the soldiers "Nayars"
and during the period of European trade it seems to have come into
use as a title held by all the military castes. Some Nayars say that
the temple menial castes and the matrilineal castes of washermen and
barbers usurped the title only during British rule, in order to raise
their status. The higher temple-servant castes, although matrilineal,
never adopted the title because they ranked above the military Nayars
and had honorable titles of their own. This paper primarily concerns
the Nayar military retainers, their village headmen, chiefs, and
royalty.

THE HIGHER POLLUTING CASTES

564 The high castes were the religious and secular aristocrats and their
162 personal servants. In many respects the polluting castes lived a sepa-
rate social life, being located in a different part of the village. They
621 included, in order of rank, Tiyyars (called Iravas in Cochin), who
were palm-wine makers and tenant farmers, with twenty to forty
households per village; Kanisans or astrologers, with one to three
households per village; the artisan castes of blacksmiths, goldsmiths,
carpenters, bell-metal workers, and stonemasons (who ranked equally),
each with one to three houses per village; low-caste washermen and
barbers (who ranked equally), each with one to five houses per vil-

621

lage; and bow makers, each with about one to ten houses per village. 564
Tiyyars, astrologers, washermen, and barbers had double unilineal 162
descent: localized patrilineages with dispersed exogamous matrilineal [613
clans. Artisans and bow makers had patrilineages only. [613]

The polluting castes worked for each other and for the higher castes. 564
Tiyyars held land on a sub-tenure from landlords and Nayar tenants. [427)
Astrologers and artisans gave services to the higher castes, to each other, and to the Tiyyars, who ranked above them. Barbers worked for all the higher polluting castes but not for the "good" castes, who employed the Nayar barber. Washermen laundered for all the higher polluting castes but not regularly for the "good" castes, who employed the Nayar washerman. However, the low-caste washerman's lineage owed services to the "good" castes at death, menstruation, and childbirth. Bow makers served Nayars and Tiyyars. Each of the polluting castes was endogamous and interdined only within the caste.

THE LOWER POLLUTING CASTES

On the outskirts of the village, in separate small hamlets, lived the very low castes of Parayas and Pulayas. Parayas were a small caste of basket and umbrella makers. Two or three households had a village right to serve all castes above them. Pulayas were until 1850 the agricultural serfs of Nayars, temple servants, and Brahmans (Buchanan, 1807: 370–372). As highly polluting castes, Pulayas and Parayas were theoretically forbidden to approach the high castes within a distance of sixty-four feet. They might not enter the "good" area of the village or walk on the main paths.

OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Muslims, called Mappillas, were concentrated in the Zamorin's king- 563
dom, where they followed patrilineal descent. In 1931 they formed [162)
about 15 per cent of Kerala's population. Their presence dates from
the ninth century, when Arab traders began to make converts, prob- [797)
ably mainly from the Tiyyars and the coastal caste of fishermen. From
the Arabs and from these converts there sprang a flourishing trad- [439)
ing community which increased greatly in the fourteenth century
(Logan, 1951, I: 192–197). The Zamorins derived a large measure of
their power from the Muslims through taxes and naval support (Ay-
yar, 1938: 54). Muslims lived mainly in the ports and at inland trad-
ing posts on the banks of rivers. They were partly outside the village [361]
ranking system, which had its basis in differential land rights, and
were theoretically outside the Hindu religious hierarchy. Nevertheless, [554]
Muslims were in some contexts accorded a rank ritually and socially
between that of Nayars and Tiyyars.

563 [162] The Christians of Kerala numbered about 20 per cent of the population in 1931. The Syrian Christians, the most ancient and numerous group, may be descended from Persian Nestorians; they were trading on the coast at least by 525 A.D. (McCrindle, 1897: 119). Christians were and are concentrated in Travancore and Cochin. They received [651] land grants near the ports and enjoyed virtual self-government provided they paid taxes to the kings (Logan, 1951, I: 260–270; III: cxxi–cxxvi). As landlords, tenants, and administrators—as well as traders—they ranked socially parallel to the Nayars and were served in the same manner by Hindu polluting castes and serfs. Their trade declined after the Arabs became dominant on the coast, and some of them began to serve in the royal armies along with Nayars. The Portuguese converted some Syrians to Roman Catholicism, but the converts still retained the Syriac rite. All Syrians were readily distinguishable from the lower-ranking Latin Catholics, converts to Catholicism from Portuguese times who were drawn from various polluting castes.

The Economic System

438 The principles of reciprocity and redistribution,[4] rather than of market trade, dominated the village economy until toward the mid-nineteenth [564] century. In villages, castes were characterized by hereditary occupations and correspondingly by hereditary, differential rights in the [463] produce of village lands (Logan, 1951, I: 110–112, 269, 270, 599–600, 623). The village landlord and the Nayar tenants were the main redistributive agents, collecting in goods from the lower orders and [592] redistributing them in customary shares. In all village economic transactions, *households*, and not whole caste groups or individuals, were the units of interaction.

471 592 566 The village landlord's household "owned" almost all the land in the village. "Ownership" meant both more and less than modern Western landownership (Logan, 1951, I: 602–603). The landlord might not sell his land without the consent of the king or of a chief, and sale was restricted to families of appropriate caste. He might not evict his tenants, village servants, or serfs without their consent unless they committed grave crime (*ibid.*, I: 607). On the other hand, the landlord's ownership included judicial rights over the village population.

The landlord retained a portion of the land as his private domain for cultivation by his serfs. The rest was held by Nayar retainer households as non-cultivating tenants (*kānakkar*). The tenant's household

---

[4] For an analysis of the general operation of these principles in the Indian village economy, see Neale, 1957: 218–236.

originally rendered a portion of the produce to the landlord and ad- 471
ditionally paid tribute in kind at New Year and at the succession of 592
a new landlord or a new tenant on the death of the old (*ibid.*, I: 605- 566
614). In return for their hereditary land rights tenants owed military
and personal services to the landlord or to his military representative.

Each Nayar tenant household, like the landlord, retained a portion of land for cultivation by its serfs. Serfs were attached to the plots on which they lived, took the house name of their masters and were held as ancestral property. The master supplied the serf with daily rice, building materials, a house site, and special gifts at life crises and festivals.

Each tenant household also gave some lands to cultivating subtenant households (*verumpāttamdar*) of the Tiyyar caste. According to Logan, the latter traditionally retained one-third of the net produce and surrendered the rest to their masters (*ibid.*, I: 583).

The Nayar servant castes and most of the polluting castes of village 564 ●
servants (astrologers, artisans, bow makers, basket makers, etc.) 471
owed their main services to the landlord, the Nayar tenants, or both.
Each family held the hereditary service right of a village or occasionally of a small group of adjacent villages. Village servants gave their services to the appropriate higher-caste households when required. In return they received from each patron household customary biennial shares of rice and other goods after the two harvests of the year. Each servant family held a house site and garden from the landlord by hereditary right and was provided by its various patrons with the materials (metal, wood, etc.) of its craft.

Among the higher polluting castes, most of the village servants 564
(astrologers, artisans, washermen, barbers, etc.) simply exchanged 437
services reciprocally without making gifts of grain. Within this range of castes, however, Tiyyars, as cultivators, were subsidiary agents of redistribution, for they received the services of almost all the village servant castes and made biennial gifts to them of grain.

The village was thus almost self-sufficient for food and the daily [262]
necessities of life. In addition, part of its produce in rice and coconuts
went out in the form of annual tribute given by the landlord to his
district chief. The chief in turn gave tribute to the king and in addi- [651]
tion rendered succession fees and gifts at life-crisis rites (Logan, 1951, II: ccxviii–ccxix; Ayyar, 1938: 270).

A large part of the king's revenue, however, came from taxes on 651
overseas trade. Before 1500 the trade was in the hands of Arab 439
merchants, who obtained pepper and other spices from inland land-

European trade shook the foundations of the caste system in other 439
ways. Ports grew larger, and within them European merchants employed 564
Christian converts, artisans, and runaway serfs. Near the ports, [567]
serfs sometimes became slaves, being torn from their ancestral lands
and sold or hired for cash.

Nevertheless, until the introduction of steam power in the second [375]
half of the nineteenth century, the technology and over-all economy [177]
of Kerala did not change very radically. Trade was still limited to
surplus crops, luxury goods, and metals. Inland villages remained
largely self-sufficient, with the lower castes excluded from cash
transactions. Upward mobility was virtually confined to Muslims, [554]
Christians, and the Hindu aristocrats above the rank of Nayar retainers.
It seems to have been this lack of basic change in the technology [177]
which allowed the persistence of a strict, hereditary rank
order in villages and, within each homogeneous local caste group,
of kinship as the main organizing principle.

War and Law

The traditional period was one of perpetual wars between adjacent 635
kingdoms, interrupted only in the rainy seasons. A royal lineage's 726
strength lay in its monopoly of gunpowder, coinage, and customs 613
dues, its ability to use foreign and Muslim ships for naval warfare,
and its control of the royal domains both as a source of produce and
of Nayar retainers as soldiers. Through its superior wealth and
military power a royal lineage could force feudatory princes and
vassal nobles to muster soldiers throughout the kingdom in periods
of large-scale war. Each district and each village was classified according 701
to the number of Nayar soldiers it could customarily muster 635
for war. In the Zamorin's kingdom the strength of royal feudatories
varied between 18,000 and 1,000 Nayars; of Nayar chiefs, between 634
5,000 and 100; of village headmen, between about 100 and 25 (Ayyar,
1938: 278). Records of the muster of each feudatory were kept by the
Nayar clerks of the palace. The primary duty of each chief was to
assemble regularly the soldiers of his district for military exercises
at the capital, and in time of war to lead them to battle, with the
king himself at their head. Within the district military training was 701
organized on a village basis. This might be done by a Nayar village 634
headman, by the chief himself, or, in Brahman villages, by a Nayar 702
military leader (Asan) who acted for the chief or the king. All 564
Nayar boys of the retainer, village headmen, and chiefly and royal

701

702 castes seem to have received a military training, although some,
634 especially of the Agattu Charna caste, later became clerks (Dames,
1921: 18–19; A. Gray, 1887, I: 412–413).

564 The Nayars' traditional arms were the sword, shield, lance, and
726 the bow and arrow, although gunpowder came into increasing use
[411] after the Portuguese arrived. Before 1500 battles were highly stylized
(cf. C. A. Menon, 1911: 56; Ayyar, 1938: 118, 171). Not more than
[177] 10,000 were commonly brought into the field at one time. Severe loss of life was prevented by the employment of Brahman emissaries who, if fighting became intense, might enter the field and arbitrate between the leaders. If, however, the king or a chief were slain, his personal vassals had to fight to the death or until their honor was avenged by the slaughter of a corresponding leader on the enemy side (Logan, 1951, I: 138).

726 Later, with the introduction of cannon and fortresses by the
177 Europeans, battles became more frequent and devastating. The Zamorin mustered a total force of between 50,000 and 60,000 at various times in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries against the ruler of Cochin (Ayyar, 1938: 169, 182). The kings had to rely in-
[436] creasingly on paying their soldiers in cash rather than on sporadic feudal levies. Permanent conquest and the control of rich lands also became a more urgent aim of the kings as the overseas trade expanded. But the Nayar techniques of fighting and their code of honor persisted until British times.

564 Within each kingdom, law was administered at several levels. Each
692 local caste group had its own periodic assembly of household heads to judge crimes (which were also sins) against the caste's religious laws. These included wrongful interdining and sexual relations with
681 members of other castes. The chief punishments were fines for the upkeep of the caste shrine and temporary ostracism. Grave offenders
567 were excommunicated with the consent of the chief. They then be-
439 came the property of either king or chief and were sold as slaves to foreign traders. In the larger castes such as Tiyyars or Pulayas the local caste group was often contained within the village. The smaller castes of village servants each had their own assemblies extending over a group of adjacent villages.

564 Among retainer Nayars the local caste group might comprise the
621 Nayars of one caste within one village, within a section of a large village, or within a group of two to four adjacent small villages. This
[692] area was called a *tara* in the Calicut kingdom and a *kara* in Cochin;
[623] we shall call it a neighborhood. Its assembly was called a *tara-kūttam*

564

or *kara-yōgam* (Logan, 1951, I: 87–88, 132–133). The functions of 621
intra-caste administration of the Nayar assembly are discussed later [692]
in connection with the lineage. [623]

The village headman, assisted by representatives from the Nayar 622
retainers, judged small civil cases concerning debt, petty theft, or
trespass. He appropriated the fines in these cases (Munro, quoted in 692
Ayyar, 1938: 288). Individual Nayars also arbitrated in small civil 564
disputes carried voluntarily to them by disputants within their own
or the lower castes. Serfs came directly under the jurisdiction of their [566]
Nayar or Brahman masters, who had the power of life and death
over them.

In the castes above the serfs, larger civil disputes and grave 692
crimes were judged in the court of either chief or king. Chiefs' 564
(*nāduvaris*') judicial powers varied with the size of their armies, but
feudatory princes (*svarūpis*) retained complete judicial rights with
power over life and death (Ayyar, 1938: 272). So also did the
Brahman managers of temple estates, although they called upon
some local chief to carry out their judgments. Murder, sacrilege,
treason, the wounding of a cow or of a Brahman, indecent assault of
a woman, and grave theft from a man of "good" caste were generally
punishable by death (*ibid.*: 282). Brahmans and women, however,
were never officially executed by order of the king. All offenses among
Brahmans were tried by an assembly of the Brahman neighborhood,
which, with the local ruler's approval, might excommunicate the offender. If a woman of any caste above serfs was convicted of a capital [567]
offense the king had the right to sell her into slavery.

The higher the cast, the wider the field of social relations. Among 564
the serfs and the higher polluting castes this was confined to a group 571
of adjacent villages. Among temple servants, village headmen, and
retainer Nayars (apart from their excursions in war) the field of social
relations was the chiefdom. Among chiefs and royalty it was the
kingdom, and among Brahmans, Kerala.

Hypergamy in the Upper Castes

Each of the castes below Nayar temple menials was endogamous, as 564
is usual in the caste system throughout India. But among the higher
"clean" castes the integration of political offices and of the larger
territorial units was strengthened by hypergamous marriages. By
hypergamy I mean the marriage of a woman of lower caste to a man
of higher caste.

In discussing hypergamy it is necessary to explain the descent 564
613

564 613 system of Nambudiris. In the Nambudiri patrilineal extended family only the eldest son was permitted to marry (with Vedic rites) within his caste, and beget children for his family. Younger sons had recognized liaisons with women of the matrilineal castes, whose children belonged to their mother's caste and lineage by matrilineal descent. These hypergamous unions were regarded by Brahmans as socially acceptable concubinage, for the union was not initiated with Vedic rites, the children were not legitimized as Brahmans, and neither the woman nor her child was accorded the rights of kin. By the matrilineal castes, however, the same unions were regarded as marriage, for they fulfilled the conditions of ordinary Nayar marriage and served to legitimize the child as an acceptable member of his matrilineal lineage and caste.

If a Nambudiri eldest son remained childless the second son might marry a Nambudiri woman and beget children for his family. Unmarried Nambudiri women, of whom there were many, remained in their natal homes and were maintained by their fathers and brothers. The eldest son of a Nambudiri house might however have several Brahman wives (who lived patrilocally with him) and also several Nayar partners whom he visited in their homes. Nambudiri younger sons lived and ate in their natal households, headship of which passed from the eldest son down the line of brothers and then dropped to the next generation. In this way the Nambudiri family was prevented from splitting into segments and was enabled to maintain its ancestral estate intact over many generations. If in any generation a family had no son, succession was ensured by the adoption of a daughter's husband or of a man related through some cognatic tie.

The possible directions of hypergamous marriages in the Cochin kingdom are briefly as follows. In the royal lineages marriages were entirely hypergamous. In Cochin and Walluvanad royal women married only Nambudiris of the highest and wealthiest sub-castes within the kingdom. Royal men married women of chiefly lineages within the kingdom, of village headmen's lineages within their own domain, or of retainer Nayar lineages in the royal villages. In the Calicut kingdom royal women married either Nambudiris or the feudatory princes of higher rank and more ancient lineage than themselves. Royal men married women of the same lower matrilineal groups as in the Cochin and Walluvanad kingdoms. Women of the feudatory royal lineages married only Nambudiris; men married royal women or women of chiefly, village headmen's, or retainer Nayar lineages within their own area of rule.

564 613 Each Nayar chiefly lineage, like royalty, normally counted itself a separate caste and married only hypergamously. Women of chiefly lineages married the royals or feudatory royals to whom their lineages were immediately subordinate, or wealthy Nambudiris, usually of their own district. Men of chiefly lineages married women of village headmen's lineages within their district, or women of retainer Nayar lineages, usually in their own villages.

[622] Village headmen's lineages occasionally contracted marriages reciprocally with other village headmen's lineages of the chiefdom which had originally sprung from the same retainer caste. They also provided wives for chiefs and Brahmans and husbands for retainer women, usually of their own villages.

564 794 613 Among temple servants, Nayar retainers, and Nayar temple menials the majority of marriages were between persons of the same caste. A few women in the Psharodi, Variyar, Poduval, and Nambyar castes married Nambudiris, especially those whose families managed the temples where they worked. A few such women also married men of the Chakkyar and Pushpagan castes, which had descent systems like that of the Nambudiris. A few men of these matrilineal temple-servant castes married women of Nayar retainer and Nayar temple-menial castes in the villages of their work. Nayar women were particularly convenient partners for temple servants and Nambudiri temple priests because of the latters' spatial distribution. Often a temple-servant lineage or a Brahman priestly family held the hereditary right of service in six or eight small temples in villages up to ten miles away. One man of the lineage might spend much of his life working away from home in one of the more distant temples. He would live on food previously offered to the deity, occupy a room attached to the temple kitchen, bathe in the temple bathing pool, and visit a local Nayar wife at nights, returning home for life crises and festivals.

564 Women of the retainer Nayar castes might receive husbands from all the castes above them. Sudra Nayar women living in Brahman-owned villages or on the estates of large temples were the most likely to form links with Brahmans and temple servants; Charna Nayars and Pallichans, with royalty or chiefs; and Kiriattil women, with village headmen. Thus hypergamous unions entered into by retainer Nayars in general followed the main lines of lord-vassal relationships. However, "odd" marriages with individuals of any higher rank in nearby villages were permitted.

Because the higher castes were much smaller than they were, the Nayar retainers probably gave less than 10 per cent of their women

564 to men of higher caste. Men of the retainer castes made still fewer marriages in the castes of temple menials. The latter also received as husbands a few temple servants and a few Nambudiris of the lowest sub-castes of cooks and household priests. The temple-menial castes did not intermarry, and their men seem thus to have been confined to women of their own caste. Hypergamy stopped at this level and the Nayar servant castes were each endogamous.

564
613 The hypergamy of the Nayar office-bearing lineages fitted their gradual social mobility and lack of rank parity with each other. With time, because of the vicissitudes of war and conquest, a retainer lineage might be appointed as village headmen, and might later even aspire to chiefly rank. Several of the chiefly lineages of Kerala can be traced back to much humbler origins three to six centuries ago. Apart from the regular offices of rule over territorial units, commoner Nayar lineages might also attain special rank as ministers or military leaders. When a lineage received promotion in this way, its members in course of time declared themselves ritually higher than those of the caste from which they sprang and would no longer interdine or intermarry with that caste on equal terms. Hypergamy permitted these isolated office-bearing lineages to marry in unequivocally higher and unequivocally lower groups, but to side-step the awkward question of their precise rank in the hierarchy as a whole.

Hypergamous marriages, like all Nayar marriages, were tenuous and carried few obligations. Nevertheless, the dependence of aristocratic castes on each other for spouses and genitors must have strengthened relations between them. Hypergamy inextricably linked the secular and the religious hierarchies, whose interests in many contexts were opposed. Nambudiris waged a perpetual struggle to preserve their lands and judicial powers from encroachment by kings and chiefs. Their religious laws forbade bloodshed on the estates of their great temples. If a local ruler invaded such an estate or flouted its laws, the Brahmanical assembly exercised its religious authority to fine him in land, cash, or elephants and closed their gates till he repented. This does not mean that the kings were puppets of the Brahmans. When a king conquered a new district its Brahmans came over to his side. They gave him the right to protect their temples and to use their Nayar retainers in war, on receipt of a fine for any personal inconvenience they had suffered. They obviously needed the ruler's military protection of their religious and landed rights. The rulers in turn needed the Brahmans, for the whole social system was sanctioned by religious beliefs of which they were the chief exponents. Marriages at all levels between the religious and secular hierarchies pointed up this interdependence. 564 613

Among the Nayars hypergamy must also have cemented lord-vassal relationships. Older Nayars still take pride in the fact that their lineages have for centuries been fathered by chiefs, royals, and Brahmans. Traditionally, it was for the sake of this generalized filial bond that they were prepared to die in battle and, paradoxically, to deny themselves paternal rights in their own children.

Matrilineal Units of the Nayar Retainer Castes

THE CLAN

The clan was the largest matrilineal unit to which a Nayar commoner belonged. Its members believed themselves descended from a common ancestress, but her name was not normally remembered and the exact genealogical relationships between a clan's subordinate segments were often unknown. Occasionally, all of a clan's known members lived within a single Nayar neighborhood (*tara*). In this case the clan was co-terminous with the next lower order of matrilineal unit, which I call the lineage. More commonly, the clan had a nucleus of members within the neighborhood from which it originally sprang, together with outlying segments whose forebears had moved to other neighborhoods of the chiefdom. Clan affiliations among Nayar retainers do not seem to have extended beyond the chiefdom. 614 [621]

The clan was called a *taravād*, the word also used for the lineage and the matrilineal household unit. "Taravād" is derived from "tara," meaning "mound,"[6] in this case the raised foundation on which a Nayar house was built. Its members derived a sense of unity from the belief that their matrilineal forebears sprang from the same ancestral house, and if the site of this house still existed they retained a sentimental attachment to it. The word "taravād" (befitting for a settled agricultural people) was in fact equivalent to the English "house" in its sense both of ancestry and of place. The clan was usually called by the name of its original ancestral house site. [192] [613] [592] [342]

The clan was exogamous and sex relations within it were forbidden. Those of its members who lived near and met often used kinship terms to address each other. If a death or birth occurred, clan members had to be informed by messenger. Upon receipt of the informa- [834] [601] [203] [764] [844] [783]

---

[6] Any kind of raised foundation of earth or laterite is called a tara. Tara (meaning "neighborhood") is derived from the large platform of earth round a sacred "milk"-exuding tree (*alstonia scholaris*) located near the Nayar neighborhood temple of Bhegavadi. The neighborhood assembly congregated on this mound. [623]

THE NÂYARS OF MALABAR.[*]

IT is likely that some of the gentle readers of this 00-0 monograph are not familiar with "The Lusiad," the epic poem of Luis de Camoens, the restless soldier-poet who sailed with a detachment of the Portuguese for the West Coast of India in 1553. Voltaire, who is not given to redundant praise of anybody, styles him the Portuguese Virgil. At any rate he has written a fine epic, and from it I will quote a few lines concerning the Nâyars, with whom he came in personal contact three and-a-half centuries ago.

> " Polias the labouring lower clans are named ;
> " By the proud *Nayres* the noble rank is claimed ;
> " The toils of culture and of art they scorn,
> " The warrior's plumes their haughty brows adorn ;
> " The shining faulchion brandish'd in the right,
> " Their left arm wields the target in the fight ;
> " Of danger scornful, ever armed they stand
> " Around the king, a stern barbarian band."[†]

A former Governor of Bombay, Johnathan Duncan 701 by name, who visited Malabar in 1792-3, has anticipated 564 me in quoting some of these lines, and with regard to them he observes: "These lines . . . . . contain a good description of a Nâyar, who walks along, holding up his naked sword with the same kind of unconcern as travellers in other countries carry in their hands a cane or walking staff. I have observed others of them have [411] it fastened to their back, the hilt being stuck in their waist band, and the blade rising up and glittering between their shoulders."[‡]

The Nâyars, the Nareæ of Pilny, (Nat. Hist. VI, 21), were the swordsmen, the military caste of the west coast of India. There are some small sects or castes intervening, but broadly speaking the Nâyars rank after the Nambûtiris in Malabar, and they occupy the same position in the Native States of Cochin and Travancore.

---

[*] The first article of this series was in Bulletin, Vol. III, No. I, where the Nambûtiri Brahmans of Malabar were described.

[†] Mickle's Translation, London, 1798.

[‡] Logan's ",Manual of Malabar," page 137.

162
564 According to the Census Report, 1891, they numbered 377,828 in Malabar. The figures found in this useful document offer an instance of the unreliability of casual observation. The author of "A Manual of Malabar Law" describes the peoples of Malabar to some extent, and in his Introduction says: "The Nâyars constitute the major portion of the Malabar population." One hears of Malabar as the land of the Nâyars, as if its inhabitants were all Nâyars. Certainly they may be said to form the most distinguishing feature of the district; but, when we seek in the spirit of accuracy, we find the surprising fact that they number but 14·2 per cent. of its population.

611
564 The chief immediate interest attached to them lies in the fact of their being the best, that is the fullest, the most complete existing example of matriarchy, or, to be more strictly accurate, of inheritance through females. [171] This system, obtaining at one time amongst the Celts and other races of Europe, was probably universal in the sense that it existed at some period in the life history of every race of mankind, and is now to be found here and there in the world.

611
171 That inheritance through females was once the rule in Southern India is fairly obvious. Amongst others the Maravars, who are, so far as we can surmise at present, aborigines in the sense that we know of no earlier inhabitants in the part of the peninsula occupied by them, to this day offer strong proof of this. I refer to the genuine Maravars—the Kondayan Kottai Maravars of Tinnevelly—and not to the offshoots settled in Trichinopoly and elsewhere, who have almost entirely forsaken all the customs of their fathers.* Amongst the Maravars the girl on marriage joins the sept of her husband, but she retains her own sept name, and her children are of *her* sept; not of their father's. Marriage between persons of the same sept name is prohibited; and this is regulated solely through the mothers. The tribe is endogamous; but the septs within it are exogamous. Thus, a man or a girl cannot marry any one of the same sept, having the same sept name (which is inherited through their mother), and *must* marry some one within the tribe but of a different sept to his or her own—of his father's sept or any other. Though property

---

* Most of the cigar makers of Trichinopoly are Maravars in origin. Their names — ———Naidu, ————Pillay, and so on are borrowed from people of higher castes.

devolves through the men, the degrees between which ouo
marriage is prohibitive are inherited through the women.*

But the circumstance that inheritance through women 101
was once, perhaps, the rule in Southern India cannot be
accepted as of itself proof that the Nâyars are identical 174
with the Dravidians, as the people of Southern India are [611]
commonly called. It is not yet time to say whether they [171]
are or are not. To the ordinary visitor their outward
appearance, customs, habitations, mode of life generally, are very different from what he sees in the Telugu or Tamil countries; for Malabar, "the west coast," is as unlike the rest of the Presidency as Burma. The only other district of the Madras Presidency which resembles Malabar, is Ganjám, more particularly the northern part of it, where the people are almost entirely Aryan. The resemblance between these, the Uriyas of Gumsoor and thereabouts, a fine fighting stock, and the Nâyars of Malabar is very striking. It is not, perhaps, a mere coincidence that in these two furthest remote corners of the Presidency alone, the people at large are to be seen wearing umbrella hats to protect them from the sun.

The Nâyars are divided into clans, (we will call them 564
clans for want of a better term), many of which intermingle through marriage, but some of them are endogamous. The precise number of these clans cannot be given, as it is disputed whether certain of them have a right to belong to the cognate Nâyar body. The names of the clans which have come directly under my measuring instruments are these:—

Kiriyattil.
Sûdra.
Kurup.
Nambiyâr.
Úrâli.
Nalliôden.
Viyyûr.
Akattu Chârna.
Purattu Chârna.
Vattakkâd.
Vangilôth.
Kitâvu.
Pallichan.
Muppathinâyiran.
Vîyâpâri or Râvâri.
Attikkurissi.
Mânavallan.
Vengôlan.
Adungâdi.
Adiôdi.
Âmayengolam.

This list is not in order of priority.

---

* An example of this custom existing in another land may be quoted here from a modern book—'The Caroline Islands,' by F. W. Christian, 1899: "Descent is traced through the mother—a custom tolerably common amongst the Oceanic races in general. Members of the same tipu or clan cannot marry." (Page 74.)

564 The Kurup, Nambiyâr, Viyyûr, Mânavallan, Vengôlan,
Nelliôden, Adungâdi, Kitâvu, Adiôdi, Âmayengolam, all
superior clans, belong, properly speaking, to North
Malabar. The Kiriyattil, or Kiriyam, said to be derived
from the Sanskrit graham, a house (a doubtful derivation)
is the highest of all the clans in South Malabar, and is
supposed to comprise or correspond with the group of
clans just named of North Malabar. In the old days
every Nâyar chief had his Chârnavar, or adherents. The
Purattu Chârna are the *outside* adherents, or the fighters,
and so on, and the Akattu Chârna are *inside* adherents—
clerks and domestics. The clan from which the former
were drawn is superior to the latter. The Urâli are said
to have been masons; the Pallichans, mancheel*
bearers.†

The Vattakkâd clan, whose proper métier is producing
gingelly or cocoanut oil with the oil mill, is the lowest
of all excepting, I think, the Pallichan. Indeed, in North
Malabar, I have frequently been told by Nâyars of the
superior clans that they do not admit the Vattakkâd to
be Nâyars, and say they have adopted the honorific affix
"Nâyar" to their names quite recently. It seems rather
[141] odd that this clan, or at any rate one sub-clan of it is
almost the tallest and has the finest nasal index, being
the only clan whose nasal index is finer than that of the
Nambûtiri.

564 Union by marriage, or whatever the function may be
called, is permissible between most of the other clans,
582 the rule which was noticed already under "Nambûtiris"‡
by which a woman may never unite herself with her
inferior, being always observed. That is, she may unite
564 herself with a man of her own clan or with a man of any
superior clan, or with a Nambûtiri, an Embrântiri or
any other Brâhman, or with one of the small sects coming
between the Brâhmans and the Nâyars, but she cannot
under any circumstances unite herself with a man of a
[264] clan which is inferior to hers. Nor can she eat with
others of a clan inferior to hers. A man may, and does
[851] without restriction. Her children, by an equal in race
[613] and not only in mere social standing, but never by one

---

[493]

* A mancheel is a conveyance carried on men's shoulders, more like a hammock *slung* on a pole, with a flat covering over it, than a palankeen. The palankeen is unknown in Malabar.

† There is in the Cochin state a clan, Elâyadan, which is practically equal in status to the Nambûtiri.

‡ Madras Government Museum Bulletin, Vol. III, No. 1.

who is racially inferior, belong to *her* Taravâd. The 564
children of the inferior mothers are never brought into 851
the Taravâd of the superior fathers. That is, they are
never brought into it to *belong* to it. But they may live 613
there. And where they do so, they cannot enter the
Taravâd kitchen or touch the women while they are
eating. Nor are they allowed to touch their father's
corpse. They may live in the Taravâd, under these and
other disabilities, but they are never *of* it.

It will be as well to avoid here a possible error that 564
may have arisen from the statement that most of the 582
clans may intermingle. Those of the same clan name
may marry. The Nâyars of North Malabar are held to
be superior all along the line, clan for clan, to those
of South Malabar, which is divided from the north by the
river Korapuzha, 7 miles north of Calicut; so that a
woman of North Malabar would not unite herself to a
man of her own clan name of South Malabar. There
will be more to say on the point when we come to
"Marriage." A Nâyar woman of North Malabar cannot 564
pass northward beyond the frontier; she cannot pass the 784
hills to the eastward; and she cannot cross the Korapuzha
to the south. It is tabu. To the west is the sea. The 562
women of South Malabar are similarly confined by *custom*, 178
breach of which involves forfeiture of caste. To this 486
rule there is what appears to be an exception, and this
exception is now having some slight effect, since of late
years the world has come in touch with the Malayâli
who now-a-days goes to the University, studies medicine
and law in the Presidency town or even in far off
England. It is that women of the relatively inferior
Akattu Chârna clan are not under quite the same restrictions
as regards residence as are those of most of the
other clans; so in these days of free communications
when Malayâlis travel and frequently reside far from
their own country, they often prefer to select wives from
this Akatta Chârna clan. This may have some effect on
the status of the clan.

But the old order changeth everywhere, and now-a-days Malayâlis who are in the Government service and obliged to reside far away from Malabar, and a few who have taken up their abode in the Presidency town, have wrenched themselves free of the bonds of custom, and taken with them their wives who are of clans other than the Akatta Chârna. But this is more new fangled than orthodox. The interdiction to travel, and the possible exception to it in the case of the Akattu Chârna women,

486
564
784 has been explained to me in this way. The Nâyar woman observes pollution for three days during menstru-
562 ation. While in her period she may not eat or drink
178 with any other member of the Taravâd, and at the end of it, that is on the fourth day, she must be purified. Purification is known as "mâttu" (change), and it is
783 effected by the washerwoman who, in some parts of South
841 Malabar, is of the *Mannan* or Vannan caste (whose *métier*
564 it is to wash for the Nâyars and Nambûtiris), but who is,
613 as a rule, the washerwoman of the Tîyan caste, giving
486 her, after her bath, *one of her own* clean cloths to wear (which is called mattu, change of raiment) instead of the soiled cloth which she takes away to wash. Pollution, which may come through a death in the family, through child birth, or menstruation *must* be removed by "mâttu." There is no avoiding it.* Until it is done, and it *must* be done on the fourth day, the woman is out of caste. It must be done in the right way at the right moment under pain of the most unpleasant social consequences. How that the influential rural local magnate wreaks vengeance on a Taravâd by preventing the right person giving "mâttu" to the women is well known in Malabar. He could not with all the sections of the Penal Code at his disposal inflict deeper injury. Now the Nâyar woman is said to feel compelled to remain in Malabar, or within her own part of it, in order to be within reach of "mâttu." My informant here tells me that the Vannan caste being peculiar to Malabar, the Nâyar women cannot go where these are not to be found; and that "mâttu" must be done by one of that caste. But this is not the rule. I know from my own observation in the most truly conservative localities, in Kurumbranâd for instance, where the Nâyar has a relative superiority, that the washerman is as a rule a Tîyan; and I cannot but think that the interdiction has other roots than those involved in "mâttu."
[123] It does not account for the superstition against crossing water which has its counterparts elsewhere in the world. As bearing on this point I may mention that the Nâyar women living to the east of Calicut cannot cross the river-backwater and come into the town.

564 The Zamorin is the over-lord of the Akattu Chârna
178 clan, and with the decline of his power and influence, it may be that the women of it have latterly taken more
562 liberty than was formerly possible.

---

* More will be said on this point when we come to describe the Tîyans.

582
*[564] endogamous Attikkurissi clan of the Nâyars, who look
upon it as the most fitting union.

MARRIAGE.

58
> "The haughty nobles and the vulgar race
> Never must join the conjugal embrace."
>
> *The Lusiad.*

[656] The common assertion that there is no such thing as marriage amongst the Nâyars, so easily accepted in belief that the Government has been persuaded into a commission to examine the question and to pass an edict entitled "The Malabar Marriage Bill" (which happily fell dead, and is extremely unlikely to effect the customs of the Nâyars and others following the Marumakkattâyam law of inheritance), reminds one of the weary disquisition by people who are dull enough to try and prove that Shakespeare's plays were not written by Shakespeare, but by another fellow of the same name. No events of life being so realistic to man as marriage and death (to the individual, to the tribe, to the people) shallowness rather than sturdy hardihood of racial character is perhaps indicated when we find any downright change in the ceremonial of marriage, even though it be but some ephemeral divagation and not properly speaking radical change.

175 Buchanan, writing in 1800, tells us that Nâyar girls
are married before 10, so that they may not be deflowered
585 by nature, but the husband never afterwards cohabits
[582] with his wife. It would not be decent. He allows her
this and that, and she lives in her mother's house where
[837] she may admit a lover of her own or of a higher caste;
the lover giving her a small present; never a large one,
which would indicate that she was influenced by mercenary motives. He says the young people vie with each
837 other for favour of the other sex, but that, should a Nâyar
175 man have intimacy with a Tîyan (a lower caste) woman,
564 he is put to death and the woman is sold to the Mâppilas!
In the case of the *chère amie* being a slave—presumably
of the Cheruman or cognate tribes—both are put to death.
[626] If this be true, there were forcible means used in those
days for preventing intermixture of the people of the
higher and lower castes. Buchanan tells us also that in
North Malabar, where as a rule the lady lives in his home,
the Nâyar or Nambûtiri lover may put her to death,
should she be guilty of infidelity; and he may send her
home whenever he pleases.

The times have changed things a little: a little only 178
because after all the change is on the surface: it is not
radical. Now-a-days, when there is a penal code to deal [671]
with persons who kill others, the Nâyar cannot keep a [595]
concubine of a caste (not a clan) lower than his own
without fear of social ex-communication. The killing, 564
except perhaps now and then *sub rosâ*, is a thing of the [595]
past.

The custom which permits the woman to cohabit with 582
a man, her equal or superior in caste, has been alluded to
more than once. I will now make some use of the 564
(Government) Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission, [127]
published in 1894, which contains much information which is extremely valuable to the anthropologist and the folklorist, and none the worse for being found together with views and opinions with which he cannot agree. One of the points to which the Commission directed special attention was "as to the customs connected with Hindu marriages in Malabar" and the evidence collected respecting these may be accepted as correct, and the delineation of existing custom may be taken as authoritative. Now the custom which permits the man to cohabit with a woman lower in the social scale than himself prohibits the woman from exercising the same liberty. "This is called the rule of *Anulómam* and *Pratilómam*. Dr. Gundert derives *Anulómam* from *anu* = with + *lómam* = *rómam* = the hair: going with the hair or grain. So *Pratilómam* means "going against the hair or grain." According to this usage a Nâyar woman, consorting with a man of a higher caste follows the hair, purifies the blood, and raises the progeny in social estimation. By cohabitation with a man of a lower division (clan) or caste, she is guily of *Pratilómam*; and, if the difference of caste were admittedly great, she would be turned out of her family to prevent the whole family being boycotted."

A corollary of this custom is that a Nambûtiri [783]
Brâhman father cannot touch his own children by his
Nâyar consort without bathing afterwards to remove the
pollution. The children in the Marumakkattâyam family [851]
belong, of course, to their mother's family, clan, caste. They are Nâyars, not Nambûtiris; so the Nambûtiri cannot touch them without pollution.

The rule of *Anulómam* and *Pratilómam* appears to be [184]
observed with the utmost strictness and thoroughness; one finds it obtaining between members of the same clan inhabiting different parts of the country. Mention of this

582 was made on page 83, where it was said that a woman
564 of any clan of North Malabar may not consort with a
184 man of the same clan name belonging to South Malabar.
Following this principle, the man may do so. A woman
of South Malabar (inferior), mating with a man of her
own clan name of North Malabar (superior), would be
following anulômam; but a woman of North Malabar
cannot, under pain of being guilty of pratilômam, mate
with a man of her own clan name of South Malabar.
564 Alliances between the people of North Malabar and
484 South Malabar seem to be extremely rare; partly, perhaps,
because of this custom which is all compulsive,
784 partly because the Nâyar women of North Malabar
[628] cannot cross the river which marks the boundary between
the two. Nor, as said before, can the Nâyar women of
Chirakkal, the northern-most portion of Malabar, cross
the river which lies between it and South Canara to the
northward. Thus, they cannot go beyond their northern
or southern boundaries. The origin of this interdiction
to cross the river southwards has been explained to me
as emanating from a command of the Kólattiri Rajah in
days gone by, when, the Arabs having come to the
country about Calicut (South Malabar), there was a
chance of the women being seized and taken as wives.
An explanation which is somewhat fanciful. The prohibition
to cross the river to the northwards is supposed to
have originated in much the same way, but I have not
564 noted precisely what it is. Again, men of the Kurup
clan of Katattanâd may mate with women of the
582 Nambiyâr clan who live in Kôttayam, but they may not
mate with women of the Nambiyâr clan living in
Chirakkal. The custom imputing superiority or inferiority
to those of a clan inhabiting a certain locality is
obscure; it has its counterpart elsewhere in Malabar.

"Except the Nambûtiri, the Nâyar has no other
793 priestly, spiritual or religious instructor; and it is for the
564 gratification of this Bhú-dévan (earth god) that the Sûdra
woman, if she has any religious instruction at all, is
taught that she was created." We have heard what
Hamilton has said about this (see Bulletin, Vol. III, No. I).
Though the first portion of this statement is not quite
accurate, for we have seen that the priests and religious
instructors of the Nâyars are not admitted to be, strictly
speaking, Nambûtiris, yet on the whole it is not far wrong,
as the Nambûtiri is esteemed as a very exalted person,
and he may ply his music among the Nâyar ladies without
very much restriction. As remarked before, the

custom is one which makes for improvement of the race, 793
bound up as it is with the Marumakkattâyam system, 564
which, guided by the anulômam principle, has fewer hindrances
in the way of natural selection than perhaps any
other marital custom throughout the world.

The divine commands of Srí Parasu Râma, the 793
imputed originator of the Marumakkattâyam system 564
which is followed by 70 per cent. of the people of 773
Malabar, are supposed to be contained in the Kêrala
Mâhâtmyam, a work in Sanskrit verse, written on the
ordinary Malabar grantham (palm-leaf book). It purports
to be a monologue "addressed by the Rishi Garga
to Yudhishthira the eldest of the Pândus." Chapter
XLIX relates "how certain celestial damsels were
brought from Indra's world by Parasu Râma to satisfy
the sexual cravings of the Kêralam Brâhmans, and it
relates how Parasu Râma at Vishabhadri (Trichûr),
pronounced his commandment to the women (not being
of the Brâhman caste) to satisfy the desires of Brâhmans,
enjoining on them to put off chastity and the cloth which
covered their breasts, and declaring that promiscuous
intercourse with three or four men in common was void
of the least taint of sin." Unfortunately no scholar has
given his opinion as to the time when this was written.
Most likely it is not very ancient, and may be attributed
to device of the Nambûtiris. But it is respected as
authoritative. "One of the foremost Nambûtiris in
Malabar in respect of wealth, rank, sanctity and learning,"
in common with the rest of his clan, relied
absolutely on it, and informed the Commission: "The
Smiriti says the Sûdras' appointed path to heaven is
serving the Brâhmans." "The practice of Brâhmans
. . . . . having sexual intercourse with servile
(Sûdra) women is in accordance with the Sástras." "If 564
a Brâhman wished to have sexual intercourse with a 837
Sûdra's wife, the Sûdra would be bound to gratify the
wish." "A Sûdra cannot be sure of the true parentage
of the children born of his wife. Hence the Sûdras
cannot follow Makkattâyam"—inheritance in the male
line. The Zamorin Maharajah Bahadur informed the
Commission that "according to Parasu Râma . . . .
chastity should not be observed by non-Brâhman
females." Again, the "Ettan Tamburan," one of the
senior members of the Zamorin's family, a learned
Sanscrit scholar said: "It has been ordained by Parasu
Râma that in Kêrala, Marumakkatâyam women need not
be chaste;" and he quoted a sloka in proof that there

564 should be no such thing as chastity excepting amongst
837 the Brâhman women. And the Kolatûr Vâriyâr, a great personage: "A woman is not forbidden from consorting with more than one man. For the Marumakkatâyam people, who reckon their descent in the female line, there is no objection to any cohabitation which does not contaminate the female element."

581 The opinions which have been quoted are those of persons of the highest position, principals of the oldest families, and give expression to the old-fashioned Malabar custom which they would be the last to condemn. But it must not be imagined that the goddess Lubricity reigns supreme in Malabar. It seems perhaps to have been indicated that she does. Such is, however, not the case. It has been said by one whose long acquaintance with Malabar gives him what we may call admitted right to express authoritative opinion, that, "nowhere else is the marriage tie more jealously guarded, and its breaches more savagely avenged." We shall know more of the subject presently, when we have done with all that pertains to formal union between the sexes. As a matter of fact lubricity has no more followers in Malabar than elsewhere.

585 The ceremonies surrounding marriage and death seem
764 to be those in which human feelings are deepest, and consequently in these, more than in any others, we see
182 relics of a long gone past; much of the ceremonial being now apparently meaningless, and handed on after the manner of all ceremonial, for no obvious purpose, long after the original signification has been forgotten. Amongst all races of the world it is the same. These form perhaps—for the ceremonies connected with death are interwoven with primitive religious ideas—the closest links between our earlier ancestors and ourselves. The institution marriage itself is not easily liable to change or even modification, and thus it is, perhaps, that it, the product of a byegone age, is not always suited to the wants of the age in which it is found. It is rarely up to date. It is invariably blended with superstitions and restraints which people believe they believe; and the relations between the sexes are rarely natural, *i.e.*, rarely free from restraints which are souvenirs of the past, and which are resented in the present. Of course amongst primitive peoples changes in respect of marital connexions, as also in respect of death ceremonies, are imperceptible. They must be very small indeed in even an immense period; and in their case there is not that

unsuitability to the time in which they exist, which is 585
apparent amongst those societies more liable to change. 764

But whatever the reasons may be, the relations 182
between the sexes in Malabar are unusually happy.
They seem to be more than commonly natural. The 593
most obvious reason for their being so is that they are
less influenced by considerations of property than elsewhere. [421]
The desire to maintain property within the
family is the curse of all natural relations between the
sexes. What strange customs has it not put upon
mankind! We have some strange examples of these in
Southern India, as when a woman is married to the door-post
of the house, and the house owner begets children
on her to inherit his property; or when a man marries
his child to a woman, and himself begets children on
her, and the individual who stands in the position of
father may be but a few years older than the son. But
we need not look farther than Europe for anomalous
customs which inhibit the working of the law of natural
selection. Malabar is fairly free from unfortunate
customs, and it is perfectly fair to say the marital
relation amongst the Nâyars is more than commonly
natural.

A description of the ceremonies and formalities 588
connected with the marital connexion will now be [421]
attempted. The first of these, described as "most
peculiar, distinctive, and unique," is the Tâli-kettu-kalyânam.
The details of this ceremony vary in
different parts of Malabar, but the ceremony itself, in
some form, is essential, and must be performed for every
Nâyar girl before she attains puberty. Tâli-kettu-kalyânam
means marriage by tying the tâli, or ceremony
of tying the tâli, a small golden ornament, worn on the
neck, the ordinary badge of marriage amongst the Dravidian
peoples.

The following account was given by M.R.Ry. 564
K. R. Krishna Menon, retired Sub-Judge, to the Commission:— 613

"The Tâli-kettu-kalyânam is somewhat analogous to what a 588
Dévadâsi (dancing girl attached to pagodas) of other countries
undergoes before she begins her profession. Among royal
families, and those of certain Edaprabhûs, a Kshatriya,—and
among the Chárna sect, a Nedungádi,—is invited to the girl's
house at an auspicious hour appointed for the purpose, and in
the presence of friends and castemen ties tâli round her neck,
and goes away after receiving a certain fee for his trouble.
Among the other sects, the horoscope of the girl is examined [787]

564
613 along with those of the boys of her Enangan (a recognised member of one's own clan) families, and the boy whose horoscope is
588 found to agree with hers, is marked out as a fit person to tie the
[787] tâli, and a day is fixed for the tâli-tying ceremony by the astrologer, and information given to the Káranavan of the boy's family. On the appointed day the boy is invited to a house near that of the girl, where he is fed with his friends by the
[574] head of the girl's family. The feast is called 'Ayani Unu,' and the boy is thenceforth called 'Manaválan' or 'Pillai' bridegroom. From the house in which the Manaválan is entertained, a procession is formed, preceded by men with sword and shield shouting a kind of war-cry. In the meantime a procession starts from the girl's house, with similar men and cries, and headed by a member of her taravâd, to meet the other procession, and after meeting the Manaválan, he escorts him to the girl's house. After entering the pandal erected for that purpose, he is conducted to a seat of honour and there his feet are washed by the brother of the girl, who receives a pair of cloths on the occasion. The Manaválan is then taken to the centre of the pandal where bamboo-mats, carpets, and white cloths are spread, and seated there. The brother of the girl then carries her from inside of the house, and after going round the pandal three times, places her at the left side of the Manaválan, and the father of the girl then presents a new cloth tied in a kambli to the pair, and with this new cloth (technically called 'mantravadi') they change their dress. The wife of the Káranavan of the girl's taravâd, if she be of the same caste, then decorates the girl by putting anklets, etc. The Purohita called 'Elayatu' (a low class of Brâhmans) then gives the tali to the Manaválan, and the family astrologer shouts 'Muhurtham' (auspicious hour), and the Manaválan, putting his sword on the lap, ties tali round the girl's neck, who is then required to hold an arrow and a looking-glass in her hand. In rich families a Brâhmini sings certain songs intended to bless the couple. In ordinary families who cannot procure her presence, a certain Nayâr who is versed in songs performs the office. The boy and the girl are then carried by Enangans to a decorated apartment in the inner part of the house, where they are required to remain under a sort of pollution for three days. On the fourth day they bathe in some neighbouring tank or river, holding each other's hands. After changing cloths, they come home preceded by a procession, which varies in importance according to the wealth of the girl's family. Tom-toms and elephants usually form part of the procession, and saffron water is sprinkled. When they come home the doors of the house are all shut, which the Manaválan is required to force open. He then enters the house, and takes his seat in the northern wing thereof. The aunt

and other female friends of the girl then approach, and give 564
sweetmeats to the couple. The girl then serves food to the boy, 613
and after taking their meals together from the same leaf, they 588
proceed to the pandal, where a cloth is severed into two parts, and each part given to the Manavâlan and girl separately in the presence of Enangans and other friends. The severing [586]
of the cloth is supposed to constitute a divorce."

If, as has been said, the "páttu" sung by the [533]
Brâhmani, in "*Rig Vêdaswaram*" is in substitution for the Vêdas sung at the Nambûtiri's wedding—because the Vêdas cannot be used by any but Brâhmans—this part of the ceremonial seems to indicate imitation of the Nambûtiris. The Brâhmani is not however a "Brâhman lady" but merely represents one. In North Malabar she is of the Nambîsan caste.

The ceremony is much more analogous to that obtaining in the Bellary district and round about it, through [171]
which women, called Basivis, are, after an initiatory ceremony of devotion to a deity, compelled (under certain conditions) to follow no rule of chastity, but whose children are under no degradation, than to the initiation of the Dêvadâsi in her career of harlotry.* It must be [735]
said, however, that the ceremony, more especially as modified by poor people, when the Manavâlan is repre- [184]
sented by a clay figure adorned with flowers, the handiwork of the girl's mother, looks very like it. But what demands consideration now is the position of Manavâlan to the bride. Does the ceremony confer on him any of the rights of a husband? There is much diversity of opinion on the point. Some say it does, while some say it does not. It seems certain that, as a rule, there can be no cohabitation between the two as a mere corollary of the tâli-tying ceremony. Should there be three girls in a family, *i.e.*, in the same taravâd house, aged, say, 9, 5 and 3, the ceremony is always done for all three at the same time. The only condition as to age of the girl is that the ceremony must be done before she reaches puberty. The bridegroom (to call him so) is selected after consulting agreement between his horoscope and the girl's. He is seated beside her in the marriage pandal, and he invests her with the tâli. They eat of the same [824]
plantain leaf (used as a plate throughout Malabar). They [415]
are placed in the same chamber, to go through the fiction

---

* An account of the Basivis, their devotion to deities, etc., by the writer [113]
will be found in the "Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay," Vol. II., 6 (1891).

564
613 of cohabitation; and on the fourth day the bridegroom
588 severs his connection with the girl, symbolising divorce
by cutting into two pieces the cloth (called kachai cloth)
[184] which she wears. The tearing of the cloth is, however,
[586] confined to South Malabar. These are the essentials of
the ceremony, an adjunct to which is that, in spite of the
[765] divorce, the girl observes death-pollution when her
Manavâlan dies. The same Manavâlan may tie the tâli
[783] on any number of girls, during the same ceremony or at any other time; and he may be old or young. He is often an elderly holy Brâhman, who receives a small present for his services. The ceremony is always the occasion of feasting and jollification. The girl may remove the tâli if she likes after the fourth day.

588 In some parts of Malabar there is no doubt that the man who performs the rôle of Manavâlan is considered to have some right to the girl, but in such a case it has been already considered that he is a proper man to enter into Sambandham with her. It will be as well to remark here that almost invariably amongst the inferior races, the aboriginals so to speak of Malabar, girls are married
[833] (their marriage is consummated) before puberty. The fuss that was made a few years ago (by the shrieking sisterhood) about the age of consent has had no effect there.

613 The tâli-tying ceremony having been performed while
585 the girl is yet a child, the next step in the matter of
[588] her alliance with a man is the arrangement of the Sambandham. As the rule nothing more than the consent of the girl and of her guardian, the Kâranavan of the family, is necessary. There is no religious formality. The tâli-tying ceremony dispenses with everything of the kind. There is, however, in some parts a tendency now-a-days "to surround the occasion of first cohabitation with a more or less elaborate ceremonial." It is quite an informal affair, arranged by the Kâranavans of the two families. Many a time a young fellow of 22 or 24, answering my question whether he had contracted Sambandham with any one, replied that the head of his family had not yet arranged a Sambandham for him. The wishes of the contracting parties—for in great measure it is a contract—and of the heads of the families practically settle the matter. Should the parties find they are unsuited, they part. There is no dragging on under a bondage intolerable to both.

585 The following account was given by Mr. Chandu
184 Menon (a Nâyar) to the Commission. He says:—

585
184 agree, a day is then and there fixed for the celebration of the
787 marriage. This date is also written down on two pieces of
cadjan, one of which is handed over to the bride's Kâranavan,
and the other to the bridegroom's relations. The astrologer and
574 the bridegroom's party are then feasted in the bride's house, and
the former also receives presents in the shape of money or cloth;
and this preliminary ceremony, which is invariably performed
at all Putamuris in North Malabar, is called 'Putamuri Kurikkal,'
but is unknown in South Malabar.

"Some three or four days prior to the date fixed for the
celebration of the Putamuri, the bridegroom visits his Kâranavans
584 and elders in caste to obtain formal leave to marry. The
bridegroom on such occasion presents his elders with betel and
613 nuts, and obtains their formal sanction to the wedding. On the
564 day appointed the bridegroom proceeds, after sunset, to the
house of the bride, accompanied by a number of his friends.
He goes in procession, and is received at the gate of the house
by the bride's party, and is conducted with his friends to seats
431 provided in the tekkini, or southern hall of the house. There
the bridegroom distributes presents (*danam*) or money gifts to the
578 Brahmans assembled. After this the whole party is treated
to a sumptuous banquet. It is now time for the astrologer to
787 appear, and announce the auspicious hour fixed. He does it
accordingly, and receives his dues. The bridegroom is then taken by one of his friends to the *padinhatta* or principal room of the house. The bridegroom's party has, of course, brought with them a quantity of new cloths and betel leaves and nuts. The cloths are placed in the western room of the house, called padinhatta, in which all religious and other important household ceremonies are usually performed. This room will be decorated, and turned into a bed-room for the occasion. There will be placed in the room a number of lighted lamps, and *Ashtamangaliam*, which consists of eight articles symbolical of *mangaliam* or marriage. These are rice, paddy, the tender leaves of the cocoanut tree, an arrow, a looking glass, a well washed cloth, burning fire, and a small round wooden box called 'cheppu' made in a particular fashion. These will be found placed on the floor of the room aforesaid as the bridegroom enters it. The bridegroom with his groom's-man enters the room through the eastern door. The bride, dressed in rich cloth and bedecked with jewels, enters the room through the western door, accompanied by her aunt or some other elderly lady of her family. The bride stands facing east with the Ashtamangaliam and lit-up lamps in front of her. The groom's-man then hands over to the bridegroom a few pieces of new cloth, and the bridegroom puts them into the hands of the bride. This being done, the elderly lady who accompanied the bride, sprinkles rice over

522 613 [171] such children belonging of course, under the Marumakkattâyam system, to different Taravâds. We have seen already, when speaking of the Nambûtiris, that this rule of marriage between the children of a brother and sister, never between the children of two brothers or two sisters, is general throughout Southern India. It seems to be common, though there are exceptions, to the Brâhmans and the peoples commonly called Dravidian, with most of whom it is the most fitting marital union.

564 553 585 It will be interesting to add here a note on Sambandham as it is amongst the Akattu Chârna, or Akathithaparisha Nâyars (Akattu inside, parisha class),* by one of themselves. The members of this clan being devoted to indoor services, chiefly writing and casting accounts. To those of the sub-clan attached to the Zamorin who were sufficiently capable to earn it, he gave the titular honour "Mênon," to be used as an affix to the name. The title Mênon is in general hereditary, but, be it remarked, many who now use it are not entitled to do so. Properly speaking only those whose investiture by the Zamorin or some other recognized chief is undisputed, they or their descendants (in the female line of course), may use it. Those invested pay a small fee to the Zamorin. A man known to me was invested with the title Mênon in 1895 by the Karimpuzha chief, who in presence of a large assembly said thrice "From this day forward I confer on Krishnan Nâyar the title of Krishna Mênon." Now-a-days be it said, the title Mênon is used by Nâyars of clans other than the Akattu Chârna. Those who belong to the sub-clan who owe Lordship to the Zamorin look to him even now to settle their caste disputes, and for permission to perform the tâlikettu and other important ceremonies. The ceremony to be described is that of this sub-clan.

564 585 178 As the old order changeth giving place to new in the distribution of the honourable affix "Mênon," so too doth it change even in such an important piece of life as marriage, or what under another name means the same thing amongst the Nâyars. It is truly sad to read of celebration of a Sambandham ceremony at Calicut whereat there was cake and wine for the guests, and (shades of all the departed!) a ring for the bride. The departure from national and therefore rational custom, for adoption of that which is neither custom nor cere-

---

* For this note I am indebted to Mr. C. P. Raman Menon, B.A., a prominent Police official of Calicut.

564
monial when copied meaninglessly, is surely food for 585
painful reflection. 178

The ceremony to be described is not one of cake and wine, for the doings of people who have reached that bathos have little interest to the anthropologist, though they may have some to the *observer* of social diversions, but the genuine ceremony as done in orthodox fashion in South Malabar without modern adornment will now be described. My informant says in the first place [582]
the man should not enter into Sambandham with a woman until he is 30. Now-a-days, when change is running wild, the man is often much less. In [181]
North Malabar, which is much more conservative than the south, it was, however, my experience that Sam- [184]
bandham was rare before 27 on the side of the man. And now continue with the Note.* "The Kâra- 585
navan and the women † of his household choose the 564
bride, and communicate their choice to the intending bridegroom through a third party; they may not, dare 613
not speak personally to him in the matter. He approves. The bride's people are informally consulted, and if they [787]
agree, the astrologer is sent for and examines the horoscopes of both parties to the intended union. As a matter of course these are found to agree, and the astrologer fixes a day for the Sambandham ceremony. A few days before this takes place two or three women of the bridegroom's house visit the bride, intimating beforehand that they are coming. There they are well treated with food and sweetmeats, and when on the point of leaving they inform the senior female that the bridegroom (naming him) wishes to have Sambandham with—(naming her), and such and such a day is auspicious for the ceremony, the proposal is accepted with pleasure and the party (from the bridegroom's house) returns home."

Preparations for feasting are made in the house of the bride as well as in that of the bridegroom on the appointed day. To the former all relations are invited for [574]
the evening, and to the latter a few friends who are much of the same age as the bridegroom (for elders never accompany him) are invited to partake of food at 7 or 8 P.M. and accompany him to the bride's house. After eating they escort him, servants carrying betel leaves (one or two hundred according to the means of the Taravâd),

---

* Of which what follows is an abstract.

† My correspondent uses the word "Ladies." I prefer women, a finer word.

585 arecanuts and tobacco, to be given to the bride's household,
564 and which are distributed to the guests. When the
613 bride's house is far away the bridegroom makes his procession
thither from a neighbouring house. Arrived at
[276] the bride's house they sit a while and are again served
with food, after which they are conducted to a room
where betel and other chewing stuff is placed on brass
or silver plates (called thâlam). The chewing over,
sweetmeats are served, and then all go to the bridal
chamber, where the women of the house and others are
assembled with the bride, who, overcome with shyness,
hides herself behind the others. Here again the bridegroom
and his party go through more chewing while
they chat with the women. After a while the men withdraw,
wishing the couple all happiness; and then the
women, departing one by one leave the couple alone, one
of them shutting the door from the outside.

[431] "The Patter Brâhmans always collect on these occasions
and receive small presents (dakshina) of 2 to 4 annas
each, with betel leaf and areca nut from the bridegroom,
sometimes from the bride. A few who are invited
receive their dakshina in the bridal chamber; the others
[513] outside. [In a Nâyar house the sleeping rooms of the
men and women are separate; at different ends of the
[574] house.] Those of the bridegroom's party who live far
away are given sleeping accommodation at the bride's
house, with the men. About daybreak next morning the
bridegroom leaves the house with his party, leaving
under his pillow Rs. 8, 16, 32 or 64, according to his means
but never more than 64, which are intended to cover the
expenses of the wife's household on the ceremony. The
Sambandham is now complete. The girl remains in her
own Taravâd house, and her husband visits her there,
585 coming in the evening and leaving the next morning. A
564 few days after completion of the ceremony the senior
woman of the bridegroom's house sends some cloths,
613 including pavu mundu (superior cloths) and thorthu
602 mundu (towels) and some oil to the bride for her use for
[431] six months. Every six months she does the same, and
on festivals of the Ônam, Vishu, Thiruvathira she sends
[796] besides a little money, areca nut, betel nut and tobacco.
The money sent should amount to Rs. 4, or 8, or 16, or 32,
or 64; either one of these sums. Sums of the higher
numbers are very rarely sent.

"Before long the women of the husband's house
express a longing for the girl-wife to be brought to
their house, for they have not seen her yet. Again the

602
585

Again the
astrologer is requisitioned, and, on the day he fixes, two 564
or three of the women go to the house of the girl-wife, the
Ammâyi as they call her (literally "uncle's wife"). They 613
are well treated, and presently bring away the girl with [787]
them. As she is about to enter the gate house of her
husband's Taravâd, the stile of which she crosses right
leg first, two or three of the women meet her, bearing a
burning lamp and a brass plate (tâlam) and precede her
to the nalukattu of the house. There she is seated on a
mat, and a burning lamp and a nazhi (1 measure) of rice
and some plantains are placed before her. One of the
younger women [married or not I cannot say] takes up a
plantain and puts a piece of it in the Ammâyi's mouth; a
little ceremony called Madhuram Tîtal, or giving the
sweets for eating. She lives in her husband's house for [431]
a few days and is then sent back to her own with pre-
sents, bracelets, rings or cloths, gifts of the senior
women of the house. After this she is at liberty to visit
her husband's house on any day, auspicious or inauspi-
cious.

"In a big Taravâd, where there are many women, the
Ammâyi does not, as a rule, disperse sympathy and
good will in the household, and if she happens to live
temporarily in her husband's house, as is sometimes
though very rarely the case in south Malabar, and to be
the wife of the Kâranavan, it is observed that she
gets, more than her share of whatever good things may
be going; hence the proverb 'Ammâyi Ammayê Kallin- [539]
mel Vechchittu Mattoru Kallu Kondu Nârâyana'—'Place
Ammâyi Amma on a stone and grind her with another
stone.'"

Yet one more extract—a reference taken from my 595
notes. The Rev. S. Mateer, author of a well-known book on Travancore, where he resided something over a quarter of a century I think, informed me ten years ago—he was speaking of polyandry amongst the Nâyars of Travancore—that he had "known an instance of 6 brothers keeping 2 women, 4 husbands to one, and 2 to the other. In a case where 2 brothers cohabited with one woman and one was converted to Christianity, the other brother was indignant at the Christian's refusal to live any longer in this condition." I have not known an admitted instance of polyandry amongst the Nâyars of Malabar at the present day, but there is no doubt that if it does not exist now (and I think it does here and there),

595 it certainly did not long ago. Polyandry exists amongst other castes, as we shall see by and by.

58 611 We must now leave the subject of marriage, which, simple though it is, is like most simple things extremely difficult to describe. The marital relation of the Nâyar is a very natural and simple affair; yet it is the *point d'appuis* of that system of inheritance through women which was once much more common than it is now.

804 Let us hope it will remain unchanged, and that the Nâyar will be able to say always (in his own tongue), with more regard for concrete truth than poetic insight "Das ewig' weibliche ziet uns hinan."

BIRTH: ANTE-NATAL AND AFTER CEREMONIES.

843 The following very interesting note on the ceremonies connected with birth, those preceding it as well as those following it, has been very kindly given by Mr. U. Balakrishnan Nâyar; so I quote his own words:—

[564] [184] "A Nâyar woman has to observe certain ceremonies during pregnancy. First, during and after the seventh month of pregnancy, she (at least, among the well-to-do class) bathes, and worships in the temple, every morning; and eats before her morning meal, a small quantity of butter over which holy *mantrams* have been said by the temple priest or by Nambûtiris. This is generally done till delivery.

843 613 [787] [824] "*Puli-kuti.*—Another and even more important ceremony during pregnancy is the *puli-kuti* (lit., drinking tamarind juice). This is an indispensable ceremony, performed by the rich and poor alike, on a particular day in the ninth month. The day, nay, even the very hour is fixed by the local astrologer. The ceremony begins by the planting of a twig of the *ampasham* tree, on the morning of the day of the ceremony, in the principal courtyard *(natu-muttom)* of the *Taravâd.* At the appointed hour or *muhurtam*, the pregnant woman, after having bathed and properly attired, is conducted to a particular portion of the house (*vatakini* or northern wing), where she is seated, facing eastwards. The *Ammâyi* or 'uncle's wife,' whose presence on the occasion is essential, goes to the courtyard and plucking a few leaves of the planted twig, squeezes a few drops of its juice into a cup. This she hands over to the brother, if any, of the pregnant woman. It is necessary that the brother should wear a gold ring on his right-hand ring finger. Holding a

country knife *(pissan kathi)* in his left hand, which he 843 directs towards the mouth, he pours the tamarind juice 613 over this knife with his right hand three times, which dribbles down the knife into her mouth, and she drinks it. In the absence of a brother, some other near relation officiates. After she has swallowed the tamarind juice, she is asked to pick one out of several packets of different grains placed before her. The grain in the packet she happens to select is supposed to declare the sex of the child in her womb. The whole ceremony is wound [574] up by a sumptuous feast to all the relatives and friends of the family.

"*After Ceremonies.*—At delivery, women of the barber 846 caste officiate as midwives. In some localities, this duty 564 ● is performed by *Vêla* caste women. Pollution is observ- 783 ed for fifteen days, and on every day, the mother wears cloths washed and presented her by a *Vannatti* or woman 613 of the Vannan * caste. On the fifteenth day is the [844] purificatory ceremony. As in the case of death pollution, [237] a man of the Atikkurissi clan sprinkles on the woman a liquid mixture of oil, and the five products of the cow (*pancha gavya*), with gingelly seeds. Then the woman takes a plunge-bath and sits on the ground, near the tank or river. Some woman of the family, with a copper vessel in her hands, takes water out of the tank or river, and pours it on the mother's head as many as twenty-one times. (I am not aware if this practice is universal, though it certainly obtains in parts of South Malabar and even in North Travancore.) This done, she again plunges herself in the tank or river, from which she emerges thoroughly purified.

"It may be noticed that, before the mother proceeds to purify herself, the new-born babe has also to undergo some rite of purification. The babe is placed on the naked floor, and its father or uncle sprinkles a few drops of cold water on it and takes it in his hands. The [828] superstitious believe that the temperament of the child is determined by that of the person who thus sprinkles the water. All members of the *Taravâd* observe pollution for fifteen days immediately following the delivery, during which period they are prohibited from entering temples and holy places.

"*First Birthday Celebration.*—The twenty-seventh day 846 after the child's birth or the first recurring day of the 613 star under which it was born marks the next important 553

---

* Over a great part of Malabar she would, however, be of the Tiyan caste.

the couch on which the Nâyar has his oil bath. The 844
surface of it is sloping, the higher end being where the [352]
head is laid, and it is scooped out so as to suit the curvatures
of the body lying flat.* Lying on her back, her
head is raised and the thighs are stretched wide apart.
Very often she holds in each hand a rope suspended
from the ceiling, by way of support. The child is [564]
received by a woman of the barber caste."

DEATH AND SUCCEEDING CEREMONIES.

When the dying person is about to embark for that 763
bourne from which no traveller returns, when the breath 613
is about to leave his body, the members of the household,
and all friends who may be present, one by one
pour a little water, a few drops from a tiny cup made of
a leaf or two of the tulsi plant, into his mouth, holding
in the hand a piece of gold or a gold ring; the idea being [823]
that the water should touch gold ere it enters the mouth
of the person who is dying. If the Taravâd is rich
enough to afford it, a small gold coin, (a Râsi fanam, if
one can be procured †) is placed in the mouth, and the
lips are closed. As soon as death has taken place, the 764
corpse is removed from the cot or bed, and carried to the 613
vatakkini (a room in the northern end of the house) [824]
where it is placed on long plantain leaves spread out on
the floor; and while it is in this room, whether by day or [354]
by night, a lamp is kept burning, and one member of the
Taravâd holds the head in his lap and another the feet
in the same way; and here the neighbours come to take
a farewell look at the dead.

As the Malayâlis believe that disposal of a corpse by
cremation or burial as soon as possible after death is conducive
to the happiness of the spirit of the departed, no
time is lost in setting about the funeral. The bodies of
senior members of a Taravâd, male or female, are burned;
those of children under two are buried; so too are the [766]
bodies of all persons who have died of cholera or smallpox.‡
When preparations for the funeral have been [351]
made, the corpse is removed to the natumuttam or
central yard of the house if there is one (there always is

---

* Every Nâyar, and for the matter of that, every Malayali, has an oil [515]
bath about once a week or as often as he can afford. The person is well
shampooed with gingelly oil.

† These are now rare.

‡ It is the same amongst the Khonds of Ganjam.

the mouth of this pot with a piece of new cloth, and, all 765 following the eldest who carries it, proceed to the nearest 613 river (it must be running water), which receives the remains of the dead. The men then bathe and return home. In some parts of Malabar the bones are collected on the seventh day, but it is not orthodox to do so. Better [778] by far than taking the remains to the nearest river is it to take them to some specially sacred place, Benares, Gâya, Ramêsvaram, or even to some place of sanctity much nearer home, as to Tirunelli in Wynâd, and there dispose of them in the same manner. The bones or ashes of any one having been taken to Gâya and there deposited in the river, the survivors of the Taravâd have no need to continue the annual ceremony for that person. This is called "Ashtagâya Shraddham." It puts an end to the need for all earthly ceremonial. It is believed that the collection and careful disposal of the ashes of the dead gives peace to his spirit, and, what is more important, the pacified spirit will not thereafter injure the living members of the Taravâd, cause miscarriage to the women, possess the men (as with an evil spirit), and so on.

Then on the fifteenth day after death is the purificatory 765 ceremony. Until this has been done, any one touched 613 by any member of the Taravâd should bathe before he 783 enters his house or partakes of any food. A man of the [584] Athikkurisi clan officiates. He sprinkles milk oil in which have been put some gingelly seeds (all together) over the persons of those under pollution. This sprinkling [465] and the bath which follows it removes the death pollution. The purifier receives a fixed remuneration for his office on this occasion, as well as when there is a birth in the Taravâd.

In the case of death of a senior member of a Taravâd, 554 well-to-do and reckoned as of some importance, there is 621 the feast called Pinda Atiyantaram on the sixteenth day 765 after death, given to the neighbours and friends. The word neighbours, as used here, does not mean those who live close by, but, owing to the custom of Malabar under which each house is in its own paramba (garden or enclosure) which may be a large one, those of the caste living within a considerable area round about. I am not sure whether in connection with these ceremonies there is mutual assistance in preparation for the funeral; or whether there is any recognized obligation between members of the same amsham, dêsam or tara; or whether this kind of mutual obligation obtains generally between any Taravâd and those of caste round about, irrespective of s-a boundaries

765 of boundaries. With the observance of the Pinda Atiyantaram or feast of pindams, there is involved the Dîkṣha, or leaving the entire body unshaved for 41 days, or for a year. There is no variable limit between 41 days [184] or a year. Forty-one days is permissible as the period for the Dîkṣha, but a year is correct. The 41-day period is the rule in North Malabar.

[593] I have seen many who were under the Dîkṣha for a year. He who lets his hair grow may be a son or nephew [604] of the deceased. One member only of the Taravâd bears the mark of mourning by his growth of hair, remarkable [302] enough in Malabar where every one as a rule, excepting the Mâppila Muhammadans (and they shave their heads), shaves his face, head (except the patch on the crown) chest and arms, or at any rate his wrists. He who is under the Dîkṣha offers half-boiled rice and gingelly seeds to the spirit of the decased every morning after [784] his bath; and he is under restriction from women, from alchoholic drinks, and from chewing betel, also tobacco. When the Dîkṣha is observed, the ashes of the dead are not deposited as described already (in the sun-dried vessel) until its last day—the forty-first or a year after death. When it is carried on for a year there is observed every month a ceremony called * Bali. It is noteworthy [821] that, in this monthly ceremony and for the conclusion of the Dîkṣha, it is not the thirtieth or three hundred and [305] sixty-fifth day which marks the date for the ceremonies, but it is the day (of the month) of the star which was presiding when the deceased met his death: the returning day on which the star presides.

793 For the * Bali, a man of the Elâyatu caste officiates.
564 It has been said already ("Nambûtiri Brâhmans": Bulletin, Vol. III, No. I), that the Elâyatus are priests for
765 the Nâyars. They wear the Brâhman's thread, but they are not Brâhmans. They are not permitted to study the Vêdas, but to the Nâyars they stand in the place of the ordinary Purôhit. The officiating Elâyatu prepares the rice for the Vêli when the deceased, represented by Karuka grass, is offered boiled rice, curds, gingelly seeds and some other things. The Elâyatu should be paid a rupee for his services, which are considered necessary even when the man under Dîkṣha himself is familiar with the required ceremonial.

765 The last day of the Dîkṣha is one of festivity. After
603 the * Bali the man under Dîkṣha is shaved. All this over

---

* Or Bâli.

RELIGION.

771 It will be easier to convey a rational conception of the
religion of the Nâyars, not by what is written but by
what is left out; so we will proceed on this plan. The
ceremonies connected with marriage and death go far
towards indicating what are their religious ideas in
181 general. The conservative character of the people of
Malabar whose country is an earthly paradise, severed
from the major portion of the Indian peninsula by the
high mountains of the Western Ghâts, secure in its happy
seclusion, where Nature has lavished her gifts with the
prodigality of a Bacchante, prepares us for finding much
of the primitive element in their religion. With the more
uncultivated, the wilder races, this is almost entirely
primitive in character; no more the cult of a Siva or
Vishnu than of Sqaktktquaclt.

As has been remarked already ("Nambûtiris" Bulletin, Vol. III, No. I), we see in Malabar the most undiluted form of the highest, the most abstract religion of Southern India, side by side with the most entirely primitive. The Nâyars have much of both.

The saying, "cleanliness is next to godliness," is one
of those which contain much more real wisdom than is
usually apprehended. The world is really divided, as
I think Mr. Havelock Ellis points out, between the dirty
and the clean; and, if I err not, the same author tells us
that clothed man cannot be truly clean. Man has
advanced far in development when he has become a clean
animal. Now the Nâyars' religion is one of cleanliness,
undiminished by superabundant clothing. Men and
291 women can scarcely wear less than they do in compatibility with the received ideas of decency and propriety,
515 nor can they be more scrupulous in the matter of personal
264 cleanliness. No Nâyar, unless one utterly degraded by
the exigencies of a Government office, would eat his food
without having bathed and changed his cloth. It is a
rule seldom broken that every Nâyar goes to the temple
to pray at least once a day after having bathed; generally
783 twice a day. The mere approach anywhere near his
vicinity of a Cheruman, a Polayan or any inferior being,
even a Tîyan, as he walks to his house from the temple,
cleansed in body and mind, his marks newly set on his
forehead with sandalwood paste, is pollution, and he
must turn and bathe again ere he can enter his house
683 564 783 and eat. Buchanan tells us that in his time, about
99 years ago, the man of inferior caste thus approaching

683

the Nâyar would be cut down instantly with a sword: 564 there would be no words. 783 Now that the people of India are inconvenienced with an Arms Act which inhibits sword play of this kind, [656] and with a law-system under which high and low are rated alike, the Nâyar has to [178] content himself with an imperious grunt-like shout for the way to be cleared for him as he stalks on unperturbed. [201] His arrogance is not diminished, but he cannot now show it in quite the same way.

Doubtless the natural habit of seclusion common to 771 Malabar, rendered easy by the wealth of vegetation of which those who have never visited shores somewhat alike climatically can have no conception, has favoured the persistence of earlier forms of belief; but, whatever may be the reason for it, there is much more of the extremes of religious belief to be seen amongst the Nâyars than amongst any other people or caste of Southern India.

It has been noticed already how that the Malayalis [795] have, practically, no sects such as obtain throughout the rest of Southern India. Vishnu, Siva, Bhagavati, Rama—all these names of the Hindu theogony are meaningless to them. They do not know one from the other except in name. Their Hinduism is not that of the rest of Southern India.

It is time to come to concrete example, so I will 796 attempt a description of the ceremonial observed at the [773] Pishâri kâvu—the Pishâri temple near Quilandy on the coast 15 miles north of Calicut, where Bhagavati is supposed in vague legend to have slain an Asura or gigantic ogre, in commemoration of which event the festival is held yearly to Bhagavati and her followers. It is fairly representative. The deity of the temple [776] Bhagavati is spoken of as feminine in the spirit of accuracy, but it is extremely unlikely whether ten per cent. of the crowd even thought of sex in connection with Bhagavati. [782] Sacrifice of goats as part of the ceremonial was at first denied: it is a mystery too awful to be the subject of conversation. At the same time, I am inclined to think that much the weighter reason is that the priests who cling to this part of the ceremonial are ashamed to let it be known to the people that they do it. They like it to be thought that such sacrifice is appropriate to the inferior races, but that *they* are above it and have nothing to do with it!

The festival lasts for seven days. When I visited it in 1895 the last day was on the 31st of March. Before

796 Before
[793] day-break of the first day the ordinary temple priests, a
Mûssad, will leave the temple after having swept up
and made it clean; and (before day-break also) five
Nambûtiris will enter it, bearing with them "Sudhi
796 Kalasam." The Kalasam is on this occasion made of the
778 five products of the cow, *i.e.* (panchagavyam) together
[237] with some water, a few leaves of the banyan tree (Arayâl)
and Darbha grass, all in one vessel. Before being
brought to the temple, mantrams or magic verses will
[783] have been said over it. The contents of the vessel are
sprinkled all about the temple, and a little is put in the
well, thus purifying the temple and the well. The
Nambûtiris will then perform the usual morning worship,
and either immediately after it or very soon afterwards
they leave the temple, and the Mûssad, the ordinary
[613] priest returns and resumes his office. The temple belongs
to four Taravâds, and no sooner has it been purified than
the Kâranavans of these four Taravâds, virtually the
joint-owners of the temple (known as Urâlas) present to
the temple servant (known as a Pishârodi) the silver flag
of the temple which has been in the custody of one of
them since the last festival. The Pishârodi receives it
and hoists it in front of the temple (to the east), thus
signifying that the festival has begun. While this is
being done, emphasis and grandeur is given to the occa-
[201] sion by the firing off of miniature mortars such as are
common at all South Indian festivals; and, after the
[411] flag is hoisted, there are hoisted all round the temple
small flags of coloured cloth. For the next few days
[788] there is nothing particular to be done beyond the pro-
cession morning, noon and night; the image of Bhaga-
vati being carried on an elephant to an orchestra of
drums, and cannonade of the little mortars. All those
who are present are supposed to be fed from the temple.
796 There is a large crowd. On the morning of the fifth day
● 564 a man of the washerman (he is also a tailor: Vannân)
caste will announce to the neighbours by beat of tom-tom
that there will be made a procession of Bhagavati issuing
from the gates of the temple and passing round about.
[202] Like all those who are in any way connected with the
[788] temple, this man's office is hereditary and he lives to a
small extent on the bounty of the temple, *i.e.*, he holds a
[425] little land on nominal terms from the temple property, in
consideration for which he must fulfil certain require-
ments for the temple as on occasions of festivals. His
office also invests him with certain rights in the com-
munity. The Vannân has, I believe, immense power

indirectly, in the matter of giving or not giving new 796
cloths to women after menstruation, but my information 564
on the point is incomplete. Each receives from the
temple daily during the festival a fixed quantity of rice,
and their families are fed. Thus the tailor, the goldsmith, [294]
and the blacksmith, are under obligation to work
as it may be required for the temple without remuneration [326]
in the ordinary way of labour, but for the honour only.

In the afternoon of the same day (the fifth) the Vannân
and a Manûtan, the one following the other and not together,
bring two umbrellas to the temple ; Vannân bringing [293]
one of cloth, the other one of cadjan. I am not sure
whether the cloth umbrella has been in possession of the Vannân, but think it has. At all events, when he now brings it to the temple it is in thorough repair, a condition for which he is responsible. The cadjan umbrella is a new one. Following these two as they walk solemnly, each with his umbrella, is a large crowd. There are the usual processions of Bhagavati on the elephant, encircling the temple thrice in the morning, at noon and at night. Nothing more is done on this day.

Early on the sixth day the headman of the Mukkuvans 796
(fisherman), who by virtue of his headship is called the 326
'Arayân,' together with the blacksmith and the goldsmith 226
comes to the temple followed by an interested crowd,
but accompanied by no orchestra of drums. To the 564
Arayân is given half a sack of rice for himself and his
followers, a silver umbrella belonging to the temple is handed over to him to be used when he comes to the temple again in the evening. To the blacksmith is given the temple sword. The goldsmith receives the silver umbrella from the Arayân, and excutes on it any repairs that may be needful ; and in like manner the blacksmith looks to the sword.

In the afternoon the headman of the Tiyans called 796
the "Tandân," comes to the temple followed by two of 564
his castemen carrying slung on a pole over their shoulders
three bunches of young cocoanuts, an appropriate [782]
offering, the Tiyans being those whose ordinary profession [482]
is climbing the cocoanut palm, drawing the toddy,
securing the cocoanuts, etc. This time there will be loud drumming and a large crowd with the Tandân, and in front of him are men dancing about, imitating sword play with sticks and shields, clanging the shields, pulling
at bows as if firing off imaginary arrows, the while
shouting and yelling *madly*. The sticks represent swords. [326]
Then come the blackmith and the goldsmith with the

796
564 [326] sword. The goldsmith has some responsibility connected with the sword, perhaps on account of its ornamentation, although the ordinary Malayali blacksmith is quite equal to the ordinary work of a goldsmith as well as repairing clocks and watches. Following comes the Arayân with the silver umbrella to an accompaniment of very noisy drumming; he and his umbrella in great state under a canopy of red cloth held lengthways by two men, one before, one behind. The procession of Bhagavati continues throughout the night, and ceases at day-break. These six days of the festival are called Vilakku.

796 534 A word about the drumming. The number of instrumentalists increases as the festival goes on, and on the last day I counted over fifty, all Nâyars. The instruments were the ordinary tom-tom, a skin stretched tight over one side of a circular wooden band, about 1½ feet in diameter and 2 or 3 inches in width, and the common long drum much narrower at the ends than in the middle, and there were (I think) a few of those narrow in the middle, something like an hour-glass cut short at both ends. They are beaten with drum-sticks, curved, not straight, thicker at the end held in the hand. The [533] accuracy with which they were played on, never a wrong stroke, was truly amazing, although the rhythm was being changed perpetually; and their crescendo and diminuendo, from a perfect fury of wildness to the gentlest pianissimo, was equally astonishing, especially when we consider the fact that there was no visible leader of this strange orchestra.

Early on the seventh and last day, when the morning procession is over, there comes to the temple a man of the Pânan* caste. He carries a small cadjan umbrella which he has made himself, adorned all round the edges with a fringe of the young leaves of the cocoanut palm. His approach is heralded and noised just as in the case of the others on the previous day. The umbrella he brings should have a long handle and with this umbrella [203] in his hand he performs a dance before the temple. The Malabar umbrella has a very long handle as a rule, in fact the correct way to carry an umbrella is with the end of the handle resting in the hand while the arm is straight at the side.

[34 The temple which is figured in the plate[1] is situated within a hollow square enclosure, which none in caste

---

* Pânan, a caste numerically small, and inferior. They make umbrellas of cadjan and perform at temples.

[1] [See Plate XII, facing p. 252, Category 116--Analyst]

below the Nâyar is permitted to enter. To the north, 796 564
south, east, and west, there is a level entrance into this [346]
hollow square, and beyond this entrance no man of
inferior caste may go. The Pânan receives a certain
quantity, about 10 lb. of raw rice for his performance.

In the afternoon a small crowd of Vettuvars come to [411]
the temple carrying with them swords, not very dangerous
ones, and about ten small baskets made of cocoanut palm [263]
leaves, containing salt.* These baskets are carried
slung on a pole as before. These men dance and shout [482]
in much excitement, cutting their heads with their own [786]
swords in their frenzy. Some of them represent devils
or some kind of inferior evil spirits, and dance madly,
under the influence of these spirits which they represent.
Then comes the Arayân as on the previous day with his
little procession, and lastly comes the blacksmith with
the sword.

It is explained by the Malayalis that the individuals [294]
of the various castes who hold the office of tailor, goldsmith
and so on to the temple, do so, not for the sake of [326]
what they receive from the temple, but in order to mark
their position of superiority in their caste. The ceremonial
allotted to each also no doubt marks his position
in the ladder of caste.

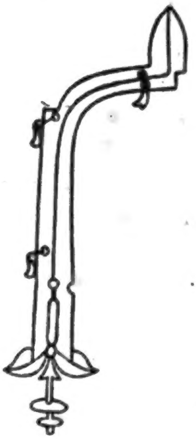
The procession in the evening of this the seventh and 796
last day is a great affair. Eight elephants which kept [231]
line beautifully, took part in this when I witnessed it.
One of them very handsomely caparisoned had on its
back a priest (Mûssad) carrying a sword smothered in [778]
garlands of red flowers representing the goddess. Up to
this time, when she is represented by a sword, it will be
remembered she has been represented by an image. The
elephant bearing the priest with the sword is bedizened
on the forehead with two golden discs, one on each side of
the forehead, and over the centre of the forehead
hangs a long golden ornament.† He bears other jewels,
and over his back is a large canopy-like red cloth richly
wrought. Before the elephant walked a Nâyar carrying [411]
in his right hand in front of him a sword of the kind

---

* The use of salt here is obscure as to the purpose. I remember a case [685]
of a Nâyar's house having been plundered, the idol was knocked down and
salt was put in the place where it should have stood. The act was looked [578]
on as most insulting.

† The discs on the elephant's forehead are common in Malabar in
affairs of ceremony. The Mappila poets are very fond of comparing a
beautiful girl's breast to these cup-like discs.

796
411 called nândakam smeared with white (probably sandalwood) paste. The shape of this sword is given in the
illustration. To its edge, at intervals of a few inches,
are fastened tiny bells, so that,
when it is shaken, there is a
general jingle.



But just before the procession begins there is something
796
564 for the Tîyans to do. Four men
of this caste, having with them
Pûkkalasams (flower-kalasams)
and five having with them Jannakalasams (?) run along the
west, north, and east, sides of
the temple (outside the enclosure) shouting and making a
noise more like the barking of
dogs than anything else. The
kalasams contain arrack which
[273] is presently given to the temple
to be used in the ceremonies.
Members of certain families
[465] only are allowed to perform in this business, and for what
they do each man receives five edangâlis of rice from the
temple and a small piece of the flesh of the goat to be
[264] sacrificed later. These nine men eat only once a day
during the festival; they do no work, remaining quietly
[834] at home unless when at the temple; they cannot approach
any one of caste lower than their own; they cannot
[841] cohabit with women; and they cannot see a women in
menstruation during these days. A crowd of Tîyans join
more or less in this, rushing about and barking like dogs,
making a hideous noise. They too have kalasams, and,
when they are tired of rushing and barking, they drink
the arrack in them. These men are always under vow.
[782] In doing what they do, they fulfil their vow for the benefit
they have already received from the goddess—cure from
796 sickness as a rule. To the west of the temple is a circular
pit—it was called the fire-pit, but there was no fire in
564 it—and this pit all the Tîyan women of the neighbourhood circumambulate, passing from west round by north,
three times, holding on the head a pewter plate on which
are a little rice, bits of plantain leaves and cocoanut, and
a burning wick. As each women completes her third
round, she stands for a moment at the western side,
facing east, and throws the contents of the plate into the

pit, then goes to the western gate of the enclosure, and 796
puts down her plate for an instant while she makes 564
profound salaam to the goddess ere going away.

And now the procession starts out from the temple, 796
issuing from the northern gate, and for a moment con- 776
fronts a being so strange that he demands description.
Of the many familiar demons of the Malayalis the two 536
most intimate are "Kuttichchâttan" and "Gulikan," who are supposed to have assisted Kâli (who is scarcely the Kâli of Brâhmanism by the by) in overcoming the Asura, and on the occasion of this festival these two demons dance before her. "Gulikan" is represented by the Vannân and "Kuttichchâttan" by the Manûtan who have been mentioned already, and who are under like restrictions with the nine Tîyans. I saw poor "Gulikan" being made up, the operation occupying five or six hours or more before his appearance. I asked who he was and was told he was "a devil." He looked mild enough; but then his "make up" had just begun. He was lying flat on the ground close by the northern entrance of the enclosure, where presently he was to dance, a man painting his face to make it hideous and frightful. This done, his hair was dressed; large bangles were put on his arms, covering them almost completely from the shoulder to the wrist; his head and neck was swathed and decorated; a wooden platform arrangement from which hung a red ornamented skirt was fastened to his hips; there was fastened to his back an elongated Prince of Wales's feathers arrangement (made of plank) the top of which reached five feet above his head; and he was made to look like nothing human. Kuttichchâttan was treated in much the same manner.

As the procession issues from the northern gate of the temple where it is joined by the elephants, Gulikan stands in the northern entrance of the enclosure (which he cannot enter), facing it, and a halt is made for three minutes, while Gulikan dances. The poor old man who represented this fearful being, grotesquely terrible in his wonderful metamorphosis, must have been extremely glad when his three minutes' dance, preparation for which occupied all the afternoon, was concluded, for the mere weight and uncomfortable arrangement of his paraphernalia must have been extremely exhausting. It was with difficulty that he moved at all, let alone dance.

The procession passes round by east, where, at the entrance of the enclosure, Kuttichchâttan gives his dance,

796
776 round by south to the westward, and leaving the enclosure
proceeds to a certain banyan tree under which is a high
raised platform built up with earth and stones. Preced-
796 ing the procession at a distance of 50 yards are the nine
564 men of the Tîyan caste, mentioned already, carrying
kalasams on their heads, and a crowd of women of the
same caste, each one carrying a pewter plate—*larger* than
the plates used when encircling the fire pit—on which are
rice, etc., and the burning wick as before. The plate and
its contents on this occasion as well as before is called tala-
pôli. I could not make out that anything in particular is
done at the banyan tree, and the procession soon returns to
the temple, the nine men and the Tîyan women following,
[782] carrying their kalasams and talapôli. On the way,
a number of cocks are given in sacrifice by people under
a vow. In the procession are a number of "devil
dancers" garlanded with white flowers of the pagoda tree
mixed with red, jumping, gesticulating, shouting, in an
avenue of the crowd in front of the elephant bearing the
sword. The person under a vow holds the cock towards
one of these "devil dancers" who (never ceasing his
gyrations, mad-like gestures and contortions), presently
seizes its head, wrings it off, and flings it high in the air.
[755] The vows which are fulfilled by this rude decapitation of
cocks have been made in order to bring about cure for
some ailment.

The procession passes through the temple yard, the enclosure, from west to east, and proceeds half a mile to a banyan tree under which, like the other, there is a high raised platform. When passing by the temple, the Tîyan women empty the contents of their plates in the fire pit as before, and the nine men hand over the arrack in their kalasams to the temple servants. Let us note here as we go along the curious distribution of this rice which is heaped in the fire pit. Two-thirds of it go to the four Tîyans carrying the Pû (flower) kalasams and one-third to the five who carried the Jannakalasams. Returning to the procession, we find it at the raised platform to the east of the temple. On this platform have been placed already an ordinary bamboo quart-like measure of paddy, and one of rice, each covered with a plantain leaf. The principal devil dancer takes a handful of rice and paddy and flings it all around. The procession then visits in turn the gates of the gardens of the four owners of the temple. At each is the measure of rice and the measure of paddy covered with plaintain leaves as before, beside them

796
a small lamp or burning wick, and the devil dancer throws 564
a handful towards the house. It then finds its way to the tree to the west under which, on the platform, is now a measure of paddy and a lamp; some Brâhmans* repeat mantrams and the elephant, the priest on his back and the sword in his hand, all three, are supposed to tremble violently. Up to this time the procession has moved leisurely, a very slow march. Now, starting suddenly, it proceeds at a run to the temple where the priest descends quickly from the elephant and is taken inside the temple by the Mûssad priests. He who has been carrying the sword all this time places it on the sill of the door of the room in which it is kept for worship, and prostrates before it. The sword then shakes itself for 15 minutes!
until the chief priest stays its agitation by sprinkling on [778]
it some tirtam, fluid made sacred by having been used for anointing the image of the goddess. This done, the chief amongst the devil dancers will with much internal tumult as well as outward convolutions say, in the way of oracle, whether the Dêvi has been pleased with the festival in her honour, or not. As he pronounces this oracular utterance he falls in a sort of swoon, and every soul, excepting only the priests and the temple servants, leaves the place as quickly as possible. The sheds which 796
have been erected for temporary habitation around the
temple will be quickly demolished, and search will be 782
made round about to make sure that no one remains near 564
while the mystic rite of sacrifice is about to be done. When the whole place has been cleared, the four owners of the temple, the senior members of the Taravâds who stand in the position of owners and who, by the way, have stayed, hand over each a goat with a rope tied round its neck to the chief priest; and as soon as they have done so they too depart. There will remain now [793]
in the temple three Mûssads, one drummer (Marayar)
and two temple servants: no others. These Mûssads are [534]
commonly called Brâhmans though the Nambûtiris do not admit them to be such. The reason for all this secrecy seems to lie in objection to let it be known generally that any sacrifice is done. I was told again and again that there was no such thing. It is a mystic
secret. The Mûssad priests repeat mantrams over the [789]
goats for an hour as a preliminary to the sacrifice. Then [793]

---

* East Coast Brahmans (Pattar) I think: perhaps Mûssads.

796 564 782 793 the chief priest dons a red silk cloth and takes in his hand a chopper-like sword in shape something like a a small bill-hook—while the goats are taken to a certain room within the temple. This room is rather a passage than a room as there are to it but two walls, running north and south. The goats are made to stand in turn in the middle of this room, facing to the south; the chief priest stand to the east of a goat facing west as he cuts off its head with the chopper. He never ceases his mantrams and the goats never flinch,—the effect of the mantrams! Several cocks are then sacrified in the same place, and over the carcasses of goats and cocks there is sprinkled charcoal powder mixed in water (karutta gurusi) and saffron powder and lime water (chukanna gurusi), the flow of mantrams never ceasing the while. The three Mûssads only see the sacrifice, a part of the rite supremely secret. Equally so is that which follows. The carcass of one goat will be taken out of the temple [534] by the northern door to the north side of the temple; and from this place one of the temple servants, *who is blindfolded*, drags it three times round the temple, the Mûssads following closely repeating their mantrams, the drummer in front beating his drum softly with his fingers. The drummer dare not look behind him and does not know what is being done. After the third round the drummer and the temple servant go away and the three Mûssads cook some of the flesh of the goats and one or two of the cocks (or a part of one) with rice. This rice when cooked is taken to the kâvu (grove), to the north of the temple, and there the Mûssads again ply their mantrams. As [533] each mantram is ended a handful of saffron powder is flung on the rice, and all the time the drummer who by this time has returned, the only one present with the priests, keeps up an *obligato pianissimo* with his drum, using his fingers: he faces the north and the priests face the south. Presently, having done with the mantrams, the priests run (*not walk*) once round the temple carrying the cooked rice and scattering it wide as they go, repeating their mantrams. They enter the temple and remain within until day-break. No one can leave the temple until morning comes. Before daybreak the temple is thoroughly swept and cleaned, and then the Mûssads go out and the five Nambûtiris again enter before sunrise and perform the ordinary worship thrice in the day. For this one day only. The next morning the Mûssad priests return and resume their duties.

Men and women who have taken part in the festival 796 564
are considered to have undergone spiritual purification [554
each in his or her own caste, and to have marked their
position in it as well as in the social scale. 783]

Beyond noting that the weirdness of the human [541]
tumult busy in its religious effusion is on the last night enhanced by fireworks, mere description of the scene of the festival will not be attempted, and such charming adjuncts of it as the gallery of pretty Nâyar women looking on from the garden fence at the seething procession in the lane below must be left to the imagination for the present, while we must be content with such accuracy as we may attain on all points: neither fancy nor beauty shall allure us from the dull path of precision, for the mere features of the ceremonial are one real concern.

It will have been noticed that the Nambûtiris hold aloof from the festival: they purify the temple before and after, but no more.

The importance attached to the various offices of those 794
who are attached to the temple by however slender a 578
thread, was illustrated by a rather amusing squabble
between two of the Mukkuvans (fishermen), an uncle and 564
nephew, as to which of them should receive the silver umbrella from the temple and bear it to the house of the goldsmith to be repaired. How the squabble arose, how indeed there could have arisen a squabble on such a point as seniority between an uncle and a nephew amongst Mukkuvans, whose descent is reckoned from father to son, I know not, but during the festival one of them made a rapid journey to the Zamorin (about 50 miles distant), paid some fees and established himself as the senior who had the right to carry the umbrella. There are points 796
of resemblance between this festival and the village [171]
festival of Southern India where the buffalo "devoted" to the goddess of the village is sacrificed, where there is the slaughter of the lamb by the strong teeth of a man, the dressing up in leaves, the man naked and blindfolded going round outside the village while cooked rice and blood are scattered wide, the blindfolded man falling senseless before the goddess at the end of it.*

There are many festivals in Malabar description of 796
which would be very interesting, but information in 114
detail is wanting in my notes, so I must perforce rest content with what has been related of the festival at the

---

* Described at length by me in the "Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay" some eight years ago.

leg, and so on, in the event of his having fulfilment of his 782 desire. The offering is never an adjunct of the prayers; it is always something done for benefit received. The thing to be noted is that a vow is *always* fulfilled; fulfilled as well as the vower can possibly fulfil it; it is never forgotten or overlooked.

> " When the devil was sick the devil a saint would be
> " When the devil was well the devil a saint was he "

is a couplet inapplicable to the Nâyar, or, indeed, to any people in Southern India, where vows, of objects to be given or animals to be sacrified, are treated always with the utmost sacredness even by people who perhaps in no relation of life behave for an hour with common honesty.

A true Malayali festival is that held at Kottiôr, in 796 North Malabar, in the forest at the foot of the Wynâd hills rising 3,000 to 5,000 feet from the sides of the little glade where it is situated. It is held in July during the height of the monsoon rain. The average rainfall at [132] Kottiôr in July is probably 60 inches at least, so the devotees generally get a good ducking. Though it is a festival for high and low these do not mix at Kottiôr. The [564] Nâyars go first, and after a few days, the Nâyars having done, the Tiyans, and so on. A curious feature of it is that people going to attend it are distinctly rowdy, feeling they have a right to abuse in the vilest and filthiest terms everyone they see on the way—perhaps a few days' march; and not only do they abuse to their hearts' content in their exhuberant excitement, but they use personal violence to person and property all along the road. They return like lambs.

I have not been able to ascertain with that definiteness 796 which would enable me to offer more than an opinion, the 782 connection between this violence of language and physical force against innocent people who are met *en route*, and the object of worship at Kottiôr, so will leave that part of the subject alone. The other day I visited the Gangamma [778] festival at sacred Tirupati in North Arcot, and observed, together with conduct the most truly religious vows being carried out with the strongest disregard to personal comfort, the use of language truly filthy and obscene *towards the goddess herself!* " Gangamma! You have a—— (using a filthy word for the vagina) as big as a basket." "She is a whore " said another; and each one in the little crowd of votaries, evidently from the same village, as they approached the shrine, tried to out-do the other in insult and vituperation of the goddess to whom they had

796 of the festival, so make the following excerpt from
184 Mr. Logan's well-known "Manual of Malabar." "It takes
788 the people in great crowds from their homes. The whole country near the lines of march rings with the shouts 'Nada-a Nada-a' of the pilgrims to the favourite shrines, chief of which is that at Cranganore (Kodungallûr) in the Native State of Cochin. Of what takes place when the pilgrims reach this spot perhaps the less said the better. In their passage up to the shrine the cry of 'Nada-a Nada-a' (march, march away) is varied by terms of unmeasured abuse levelled at the goddess (a Bhagavati) of the shrine. This abusive language is supposed to be acceptable to her. On arrival at the shrine they desecrate it in every conceivable way, believing that this too is acceptable; they throw stones and filth, howling volleys of opprobrium at her house. The chief of the fisherman
[564] caste, styled *Kûli Muttatta Arayan*, has the privilege of being the first to begin the work of polluting the *Bhoot*
[782] or shrine. Into other particulars it is unnecessary to enter; cocks are slaughtered and sacrificed. The worshipper gets flowers only, and no holy water after paying his vows. Instead of water he proceeds outside and drinks arrack or toddy, which an attendant Nâyar serves out. All castes are free to go, including Tîyars and low caste people. The temple was originally only a Bhoot or holy tree with a platform. The image in the temple is said to have been introduced only of recent years." It is a pity Mr. Logan is so reticent. My information is that the headman of the Mukkuvans (fisher caste) opens the festival by solemnly making a fœcal deposit on the image. Here again there is the same strange union of everything that is filthy, abusive, foul and irreverent, with every mode of expressing the deepest religious feeling.

Leaving now the religion, expression of which may be seen at temple festivals and during pilgrimages to these scenes of religious fervour, we will turn to that which we see in the house of the Nâyar at home.

791 Plate XII 1/ shows a man standing with a sword of the shape known as Nândakam. He is an individual called a Velichchappâd, and as he stood to be photographed by me his forehead and face streamed with blood from a self-inflicted wound on the head. The Velichchappâd is a
771 familiar character in Malabar. His profession illustrates the very mixed character of the Hinduism of the Nâyar, partaking as it does of much of the lower cult,—animism,

1/ [see cat. 116, plate facing p. 242 -- An.]

776 shape. It is overgrown with trees of various kinds, and shrubs, 778 and sometimes medicinal plants also. In the middle of this quasi-circular shrine images usually made of laterite after specified shapes are arranged in certain established methods and a passage is opened to the seat of these images from outside. This spot is so scrupulously reserved, that not even domestic animals are allowed to stray therein. No trees from the place are to be felled down, nor any plant whatever for that matter with any metal or more particularly iron weapons; for these are unholy things, the introduction alone of which inside the sanctified area, not to say the actual cutting down of the tree, is [564] regarded as exceedingly distasteful to these serpent gods. They are not to be desecrated by the touch or even by the approach of [793] a low-caste man. Once in every year at least poojah offerings are made to these gods through the medium of the Numbûdri [782] priests.

796 776 782 "Periodical ceremonies called Pāmbantullel are performed to propitiate them. These are resorted to only on special occasions for the purpose of averting serious visitations from the family. The ceremony is a long complicated process. Any individual drawn from among the Nairs themselves is capable of acting the part of priests on these occasions. A day is fixed for the opening of the ceremony; and a particular plot of ground in the house yard is cleansed and preserved for the performance of the poojahs [533] incidental to the ceremony. Then on the spot certain square figures are drawn, one inside another, and these are tastefully diversified by the interpolation of circular figures and others inside and about them, based on geometrical principles. A peculiar symmetry is observed in the matter of these figures. The figures used in the drawings are usually of various colours, red, white, black and others. Ordinary rice-flour, then again such flour mixed with a combination of chunnam and turmeric powder, thereby making the flour pure red, and burnt paddy husk are chiefly employed. Then a number of other accessories are also required for the ceremony in the shape of lamps, cocoanuts, eatables of various sorts prepared from paddy and rice and some other cooked things, such as rice, bread made of rice, and others. [533] These are properly arranged in the place and poojah is offered by the priest with the slow recitation of *mantrams*, and some holy songs or ballads in memory of these gods. Then a number of Nair women, with perfect purity and cleanliness of person are seated close to each other in a row or two. These women are to preserve sanctity and purity of their persons by a total abstinence from animal food, intoxicants and anything else of an exciting nature for a prescribed period of time; and it is only after the lapse of this period that they become worthy of being admitted to

776 the necessary solemn ceremonials. Sandalwood is the fuel used
766 sometimes. A small pit is dug which is covered with sandalwood
825 pieces and they are set fire to. When the flame burns intensely
the body is quietly placed in it, and reduced to ashes together
with, in some cases, incense and myrrh. This is believed to
mitigate the dangers consequent on the death of the serpent.

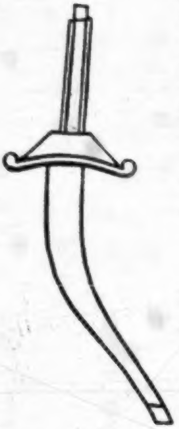
776 "The popular conception of the family cobra is that it is a
825 tiny little thing with a full developed hood, and fangs, and possessing
a golden tinge; which shine brilliantly in the rays of the sun.
At the sight of human beings it gets away to its holy shrine
exhibiting a reeling motion on its way thither. It never gets far
away from its abode of which it is the perennial guardian.

564 "One striking phase of serpent worship in Malabar relates
776 to the family of Pappanmakkat Nambudris and the singular
and effective control they exercise over serpents in general. Their
825 powers are handed from father to son. It is said that this Nambudri household is full of cobras which find their abode in every nook and corner of it. The inmates can scarcely move about without placing their feet upon any one of these serpents. Owing to the magic influence of the family the serpents cannot and will not injure them. The serpents are said to be always at the beck and call of the members of this Nambudri family and render unquestioned obedience to their commands. They watch and protect the interests of the family in the most jealous spirit. In short, these reptiles live, move, and have their being as freely as if they were domesticated animals imbued with supernatural powers.

[755] "Cases of cobra-poison are generally taken to this Brahman
family and the headman sometimes summons before him the
identical animal which caused injury and it is said successfully
effects a cure as if by some mystic and magic influence.

825 "The serpent also plays a conspicuous part in contracts
between citizens. The family serpent is in old deeds the
425 subject-matter of sale. The sale of a house compound extends
776 also to the family serpent. The stipulation in these documents
invariably is that the family serpents are sold along with the
properties; and even in cases of division of family property
amongst its several branches of members, the family-serpent is
included in the division. Such is the sacred prominence
which has been given to the serpent amongst us. Their anger
[753] is said to manifest itself in some member of the family being
[982] struck down with leprosy or some other loathsome disease; while
by their propitiation they can be converted into the guardian
angels of our households, powerful enough to preserve the prosperity of the inmates as well as to vouchsafe their complete immunity from the attacks of virulent diseases and sometimes even from death."

875
The month Karkkatakam, when the Malayalis say
526 "the body is cool," is the time when, according to
[827] custom, the Nâyar youths practise physical exercises.
[564] At Payôli in North Malabar, when I was there in August
1895, the local instructor of athletics was a Paravan, a
[553] mason by caste. As he had the adjunct 'Kurup' to his
name it took some time to discover the fact. Teachers
875 of his ilk are invariably of the Paravan caste, and when
526 they are believed to be properly accomplished they are
●564 given the honorific 'Kurup.' So carefully are things
regulated that no other person was permitted to teach
athletics within the amshom (a local area, a small
[844] county): and his women folk had privileges, they only
being the midwives who could attend on the Nâyar
women of the amshom. His fee for a course of exercises
for the month was ten rupees. He and some of his
pupils gave an exhibition of their quality.



526 Besides bodily contortions and somersaults (practised in a long low-roofed shed having a sandy floor) there is play with the following instruments:—"Waṭṭa" (as in the illustration) "cheruvadi," a short stick, and a stick like a quarter staff called a sarîravadi—"stick the length of one's body." The waṭṭa is held in the right hand as a dagger; it is used to stab or strike and, in some ingenious way turn over an opponent. The total length of the waṭṭa is two feet, and of the cheruvadi about three feet. The latter is squared at the ends and is but a short staff.

It is held in the right hand a few inches from the end, and is used for striking and guarding only. The sarîravadi is held at or near one end by one or by both hands; the distance between the hands is altered constantly, and so is the end of the stick, which is grasped now by one now by another end by either hand as occasion may require; sometimes it is grasped in the middle. The performance with these simple things was astonishing. I should say the waṭṭa and the cheruvadi represented swords, or rather that they were used for initiation or practice in swordmanship when the Nâyars were the

6: Fawcett

Kerala AW11
Nayar

● 564

/For anthropomorphic differences between various subdivisions of the Nayar caste (called clans by the author), and for similarities and differences in ornamentation, see category 116, pp. 191-224./

776
821 during that night for fear of calumny. There, the men
do not care much. We will now bid adieu to Mr. Gopal
[184] Pannikar, but not without thanking him for all he has
told us about his own people.

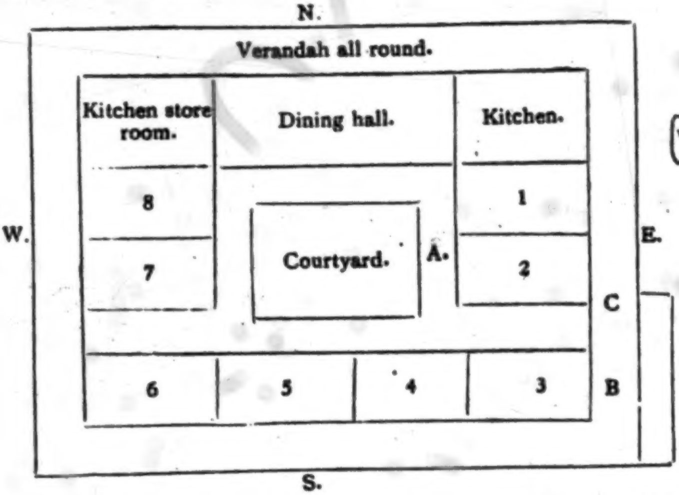
Uchâl (Uchaval) is the term used for the first three
241 days of the Malayalam month Makaram, usually falling
between the 15th and 20th January. All over Malabar,
[243] with the exception of Wynâd, above the ghâts, there are
two crops of rice every year, one with the south-west, one
[132] with the north-east monsoon. Elsewhere in Southern
India rice land is always irrigated, but in Malabar there
[776] is no such thing, practically, as irrigation, the heavy
rainfall rendering it unnecessary, and the earth goddess—Bhûmi Dêvi—brings forth her fruit under the stimulus of the rain from heaven. She produces the crops as a female produces her children, and from the 1st of the month Makaram, she rests until the cultivator again begins to disturb her, three months later, when the showers preceding the south-west monsoon fall. Uchâl is the period of three days when the earth goddess menstruates. Granaries and all receptacles of grain are closed during Uchâl—they are not even visited. Paddy is not sold. No implement of cultivation is touched. The rice to be used during the three days is pounded out beforehand and kept separate. But it is no season of gloom;
241 rather is it one of festivity. As particular forms of food
252 partaken on specific occasions have an interest of their
own, we must not omit description of the Uchâl cake—
262 the Pâla Ata. (Pâla—spathe of the areca-palm, Ata—cake). A paste is made of rice flour and water and spread thickly (about an inch thick) on one side of two pieces of the spathe of the areca-palm, each piece being from 2 to 3 feet in length and about 8 inches wide. Powdered jaggery, scraped cocoanut, powdered ginger, a little garlic and other condiments, are then put in small quantities on the paste. The two pieces of the spathe are then placed together, and they are stitched all round the edges. The whole is covered over with soft red mud and put into a fire where it is kept until the mud covering cracks. The cake is then cooked and ready for eating. It is cut and distributed to members of the family and friends.

564 In parts of Malabar the Tîyan tenants present these
262 cakes to their Nâyar landlords as a token of allegiance
or submission. Rice is the only article of food which if
466 prepared by a Tîyan the Nâyar cannot eat; so the Nâyar
241 has no caste scruples about eating the Pâla Ata prepared

564
for him by the Tîyan at Uchâl. I recollect a case of 262
murder which arose out of nothing more or less than a 466
Tîyan tenant's refusal to present his Nâyar landlord with 241
a Pâla Ata at Uchâl. I once tried to preserve one of these cakes, but the results were too disastrous for description.*

HABITATIONS.

A house may face east or west; never north or south. 342
As a rule the Nâyar's house faces the east. Every [351]
garden is enclosed by a bank, a hedge, or a fencing of some kind, and entrance is to be made at one point only, the east, where there is a gate-house, or, as in the case of of the poorest houses a small portico, or open doorway roofed over. One never walks straight through this; there is always a kind of stile to surmount. It is the same everywhere in Malabar, and not only amongst the Nâyars. The following is a plan of a nâlupura or four- 342
sided house, which may be taken as representative of the 556
houses of the rich:



[778]

Numbers 6 and 7 are rooms which are used generally for storing grain.

At A is a staircase leading to the room of the upper story occupied by the female members of the family. At B is a staircase to the rooms of the upper story

---

*For much of the information regarding Uchâl I am indebted to Mr. M. Raman Menon. [115]

ASTROLOGY, MAGIC,* WITCHCRAFT.

Astrology.—The ordinary astrologer of Malabar is a 791
man of the Kanisan or Panikkar † caste, a community 564
relatively low in the social scale, therefore carrying pollution to those of the higher caste. A curious position in society for people of a learned profession to occupy. The Panikkar is also, very often, the schoolmaster. [875] He is in request in connection with every social function, religious or other, and of course, at every birth. His astrology, he will tell you, is divided into three parts:

(1) Ganita, which treats of the constellations; [787]
(2) Samkita, which explains the origin of the constellations, comets, falling stars, earthquakes;
(3) Hôra, by which the fate of man is explained.

The Panikkar, who follows in the foot-steps of his 791
forefathers, should have a thorough knowledge of astro- 564
logy and of mathematics, and be learned in the Vêdas. 821
He should be sound in mind and body, truthful and patient. He should look well after his family, and he should worship regularly the nine planets:—Sûryan—the Sun; Chandran—Moon; Chovva—Mars; Bûdhan—Mercury; Vyâzham, or Guru, or Brihaspati—Jupiter; Sukran, or Sani—Venus; Râhu and Kêtu. The two last, though not visible, are, oddly enough, classed as planets by the Panikkar. They are said to be two parts of an Âsura who was cut in two by Vishnu.

I here reproduce a diagram made for me by a Panikkar showing the relative positions of the planets on the 7th of April 1895:

Sûryan, Bûdhan.	Sukkran.	Chovva.	Brihaspati.
Râhu.			
			Kêtu.
		Sani.	Chandran.

N.B.—Chandran remains 2½ days in each of the 12 *rasis* or celestial chambers.

---

[*] What was said under "Magic and sorcery" when describing Nambûtiri Brahmans, Bulletin, Vol. III, No. I, applies also to the Nâyar. [114]

[†] This is not to be confounded with the honorific Panikkar affixed to the name of a Nâyar. [553]

The *Santâna gôpâlam* yantram. As a whole, it represents Sri Krishna. The letters in it (there are 101) put together in a certain way form a mantram. It is used by barren women so that they may bear children. It may be traced on a metal plate and worn in the usual way, or on a slab of butter which is then eaten. When the latter method is adopted it is repeated on 41 successive days, during which the woman as well as the Panikkar may not have sexual connection. 789 842 [834]

The *Sri Sûkra* yantram is another used by childless men and women in order to obtain offspring. The others are prophylactic against evil spirits (chiefly), to defeat enemies, to succeed in all undertakings and prevent loss of property by theft, to win over the good feeling of others, and so on. The *Sudarsana* yantram not only relieves sickness, but when drawn in 5 colours on the ground and worshipped while repeating a mantram (too long to quote) wards off the evil influence caused through black magic! Another, the *Navva* yantram, drawn in ashes of cowdung on a new cloth which is then tied round the waist, relieves a women in labour. Yet another, the *Asvârûdha* yantram (Asva, horse; ârûdha, to climb) would also be useful to some people, as a person wearing it is able to cover long distances easily on horseback; and he may make the most refractory horse amenable by tying it round its neck. It will also help to cure sick cattle. In some the letters or syllables form a distinct mantram, while in others each has its own mystic meaning. 789 [755] [825]

Let me hasten to assure any one desirous of applying one of these charms to himself that they are entirely inoperative unless accompanied in the first place with the mystic rite which is the secret of the Panikkar.

Magic—The Evil Eye.—One day as I reached my camp in the Kôttayam taluk, North Malabar, my ears were assailed by the din of incessant drumming hard by. In the evening I was able to see and converse with the drummer, Châtu by name, aged 23, by caste Malayan. The Malayans are hereditary professional magicians, few in number, inferior in the social scale. They are not the only magicians. We have seen already (Bulletin, Volume III, No. 1, page 50) that some of the Nambûtiri Brahmans practise magic; but to the Malayan the Nâyar appears as often as to any other kind of mantram-man. 754 [791] [564]

Châtu was delightfully communicative. He had been putting away the effects of the evil eye from one of his clientèle;—hence the din. In effect he said: certain [115]

754 persons have the evil eye by nature. Potta Kannu, blind
eye it is called. A person having the evil eye may,
while *thinking evil*, infect man, woman or child by simply
looking at them. Those who have the evil eye are
generally women: men rarely. The cause is in the eye
itself. No evil spirit is in any way connected with it. A
woman may affect her own child. A person having the
evil eye, looking at a beautiful or a healthy child, will
affect it without intending to do so. The injury done
through the eye is often unintentional. The power of
the eye to do mischief is altogether beyond the volition
of its possessor; but it is excessively virulent when
mischief is really intended. Colour of the eye matters
nothing. Nor is possession of the evil eye confined to
[564] any caste. He knew a Nambûtiri who had it. The effect
of it on a child is that it becomes lean, feverish, loses its
well-favoured appearance, and cries in its sleep. Men
and women suffer from headaches and pains in the limbs.
Animals are disposed to lassitude and eat little. Cows
will not give milk.

791 The Malayan drives away all these unpleasant ail-
755 ments by invoking an evil spirit Vuḍikandan by name:
[776] male, having no wife. By means of magic he *forces*
Vuḍikandan to do what he requires of him. But how?
The process he would not tell. It is secret. That is, all
but the drumming. No one outside the Malayan caste
may be initiated into the fearsome mysteries. The spirit
Vuḍikandan is used for no other rite. The Malayan also
drives out evil spirits.

755 Châtu presented me with a mantram, a magic verse,
[824] written with a style on a cadjan leaf, the common
stationery of Malabar, and told me that whenever any
[212] part of my person becomes affected by the evil eye, I
should whisper the mantram over a piece of string and
tie the string round my leg, or other limb or part of
the body which suffers, and cure will take place
instantaneously.

He works by day: never by night. A whole day is
occupied in driving away injury through the evil eye in a
bad case. He need not be starving; in fact has a good
meal before he begins. The generous Châtu presented
me also with a couple of mantrams such as would cure
an easy case of harm through the evil eye, and explained
their use.

[539] (1) "Ôm: Namo: Bhagavatôm Srîparamêsvaranûm
Srî Pârvati yum Pallivêta Nâyaṭinnâî Ezhunellumpôl Srî

754 is truly human. Belief in magic and witchcraft, symbolic
789 hurts and cures, and the like, are very deep in human
nature; reason and culture do not efface it. It is one of
the earliest heirlooms of the human family, and it will in
all probability persist to the end. We cannot think of
man as being without it.* Hence the interest in investigating
it.

791 But now, as Patelin's Judge said to the draper, let
us return *à nos moutons*. There is nothing secret about
the profession of the Panikkar. His rites are secret of
course. They are *his* secret. But his profession is an
honourable one. He is not ashamed of it, nor will he
deny it. That is, so long as he confines his talents to the
practice of *good* magic.

754 With the professor of the more lucrative *black magic*,
it is quite another thing. No one will ever admit
publicly that he practises *black magic*.

Black magic.—It would never do to avoid altogether
the subject of black magic, which is cultivated and
practised to a much greater extent in Malabar than elsewhere
in the Southern Presidency. I hope to have more
to say about it later on when we come to description
of some of the lower races, and for the present we must
be content with a rather bare description of it. We
have seen already that a few Nambûtiri Brahmans
practise it. A few Nâyars also do so. But as a rule the
man who really works in black magic is the Parayan.
754 The old story. It is always the man of inferior race who
is superior in black magic. The Parayans of Malabar
564 are not, I think, identical with the Pariahs (Parayas) of
Southern India. There are obvious differences in
physique. In parts of rural Malabar one may see a
Parayan's little hut far away on the hill side, but one
tries in vain to see and speak to its inmates, who flee
into the jungle. The Parayans are complete outcastes,
and their presence carries pollution to one of
any superior caste within about a furlong. It is not
too much to say that, as a rule, they are abhorred as
the lowest of the low. They eat beef, and are there-
[262] fore quite outside the pale of Hinduism. I have
heard of fairly well authenticated cases of their stealing
[673] children of Nâyars, hiding them away in the forest and

---

[171] * The reader who has not given much attention to the subject of Folklore, may be surprised by the evidence of the persistence of these beliefs in England, available in the publications of the Folklore Society, London. See "County Folklore," chapters on Witchcraft, etc.

bringing them up as their own. The belief that they will 754
steal children helps to some extent to make them dreaded 564
as well as abhorred, but it is as skilled professors of [673]
black magic that they are really feared. Ôḍi is the name
of the cult, and those who follow it, Parayans as a rule, 754
are able to do many wonderful things. The ordeals to 564
be gone through by the apprentice in the Ôḍi cult are 795
rather trying. Some are so utterly filthy and abominable, eating human excreta being a detail, that even amongst the Parâyans, themselves dirty to a degree and accustomed to anything but a high class diet, very few are able to undergo them. Many try, and are unable to proceed. But the man who has gone through them all is a terror. He can make himself invisible, and he can turn himself at will into any animal in order to accomplish his desires. There occurs now and then the death of a woman—a Nâyar or other—enceinte for the first time, the fœtus having been removed for use in black magic.*

The Parayan magician, or Ôḍiyan as he is sometimes 754
called, being a pastmaster in Ôḍi, is credited with power to render himself invisible, using such a fœtus; and even without it, he may force a woman to leave her house at midnight and meet him. There would seem to be some connection, however obscure, with hypnotism and this latter. The Parayan, who turns himself into a bullock, in such guise, circumambulates a house thrice; then, still by means of magic, he compels a certain woman of the household to come out to him. If we follow up popular belief, we find that the Nâyar woman so drawn out of her house is bound to die within three days. But as it is well in a description of this kind, to proceed by illustration when possible, I will quote an authenticated story of a woman having been compelled to leave her house by night. The "walking the dæsil" by the bullock, one of those imaginative performances difficult to account for in human belief, must be left out of the story as no one is said to have seen it.

A Nâyar noticed that, for some days, his wife, who was (contrary to the usual custom, as we have seen it to be) living in his house, appeared to be under some occult influence; and under a premonition that something was

---

* Not very long ago there was a case of this kind, not far from Palghat, and not only was the fœtus removed but a wisp of straw was substituted in its place; apparently with an idea that, if the space were filled up somehow, the wretched woman would not die!

754 going to happen he slept across the doorway, so that she could not without waking him leave the house. The door was closed and fastened, he sleeping *inside*. In the early hours of the morning he awoke, and, fearing something unpleasant had taken place as the door was open, he called his brother who was sleeping upstairs. Together they searched for the woman, and found her lying outside in the yard, unconscious. When she recovered her senses, she said that for some nights previous she felt as if she was being called outside, and she tried hard to resist the impulse to go out of the house into the night. At last she could resist no longer and, altogether against her will, unfastened the door and went out. What happened then she knew not. There was neither removal of a fœtus nor death in this case. Such is the story. It is quite possible that stories of the kind are inculcated by wary husbands to keep the women indoors and prevent their being crowned with horns. At any rate the story is one of the kind such as every Nâyar [364] believes. It is, I may say, quite plainly to be seen that, when the Nâyar constructs his house, he takes care that there are certain conveniences, so that the women need never leave the house at night. My narrator was a native gentleman in a position of authority, living at the scene of this strange story when the events related in it occurred not long ago. The persons were named, but I did not question them, as there is much objection to speak of such things to a stranger.

754 795 564 *The Ôḍi cult.*—The Parayan adepts in the magic Ôḍi cult are to some extent hereditary functionaries.* They form one of those hierarchies, common enough in this country, of which Europeans know so little; of which the people themselves know but little as nothing connected with them or with their system is written. It is custom pure and simple—custom which is the most difficult of all to approach and define within accuracy. We will put down what is known, in the way of popular belief of course, as may be free from error.

Those who belong to it, born into it so to speak, go through a certain novitiate, not easy; but those who wish to join it from outside the fraternity of the cult are required to *prove* themselves worthy to join it; and it is their trials as novices, terrifying and utterly filthy, which are truly difficult. Members of the brotherhood are 754 bound to secrecy by solemn oaths, and the secrets of 795 their craft are not allowed lightly to pass to any outsider. 564 A member of the brotherhood may have one or more disciples or apprentices who are in the first place bound to strict obedience. These apprentices fill vacancies in the brotherhood.

---

* For much of this which follows I am indebted to Mr. U. Balakrishna Nâyar, who has kindly obtained for me matter which is in a general way, unobtainable to the European.

He who would be a member of the Ôḍi cult falls at the feet of him whom he would have as master, and begs for initiation into the mysteries. The master tries to dissuade him, but the would-be Ôḍiyan persists; and then, when assent is given, comes the trial. He follows his master to a lonely place by night. The master disappears in mist, and then re-appears as some terrible beast, now standing still, now rushing furiously towards the novice as if to tear him in pieces. If he stands still and unperturbed the novice is considered to have fulfilled *that* test. He is then required to pass the night alone in the forest, which he is made to believe is peopled with strange beings howling horribly. When he has satisfied the master that he is not afraid, he is subjected to other tests, and he is eventually accepted as a novice. He is introduced formally to the brotherhood on a certain selected day, when, having invited them to a feast, pûja is made to the dread spirit worshipped by them—Nîli of Kallaḍikôd or Kallaḍikôd Nîli, as she is called (Kallaḍikôd is the *place* name), through whose aid the Ôḍiyan works his devilment. Flesh and liquor are consumed, and the novice is taught how to procure the magical *Pilla thilum* (infant oil).

The principal ingredient to be used in preparing this is a fœtus of some 6 or 7 months' growth. The Ôḍiyan fixes his eye on some woman, who may be of any caste other than his own, in her first pregnancy. Then, on a selected day, usually a Friday, he proceeds to her house at midnight, provided, that is, he meets with no inauspicious omen on the way. I am not sure what omens are auspicious or the contrary; but at any rate the Ôḍiyan [787] returns home should he meet with an omen which is unfavourable, and starts out again some other night. Transforming himself into a dog, a bullock, a cat or some other quadruped, he walks thrice round the house, shaking vigorously a cocoanut-shell containing *gurusi*, a compound of turmeric water, lime and other substances, the colour of which is red. The woman whose appearance is desired comes out. She cannot help herself. If locked in she bangs her head against the wall, and yells

754
795 until she is allowed to go out. Once out, she rushes like
● 564 a mad thing into the arms of the Ôḍiyan. He takes her by the hand and leads her to the courtyard or outside it. At once she is stripped naked. The choru kindi (blood—vessel: the shell) being placed near it, the womb expands, and the fœtus is easily removed in a moment.
[824] A few leaves of the mailôsika plant (Polycarpæa spadicea*) are placed as was the other instrument of magic, and the womb contracts to the normal dimensions.

No wonder the Ôḍiyan is feared. By means of this *pilla thilum* he may render himself invisible; in fact he is able to do anything, according to popular belief.

SPIRITS, EVIL AND BENEFICENT, HOW SUBDUED.†

776
789 A regular working magician tells us something more of these. The most important of the evil spirits (Dûr murti) are—

Karinkutti.
Kuttichchâttan (we have met him before).
Mâranakutti.
Kallâti mûttam.
Parakkutti.
Ôḍikkutti.
Kuttu bhâiravan.
Bhâiravan.
Vanni bhâiravan.
Chotâla bhadra kâli.
Dûmapati.
Narasihmamûrti.
Kâla bhâiravan.
Ôḍi bhâiravan.

Nearly every man, woman and child in Malabar wears some protective charm against evil spirits. Such charms are also very commonly tied round the necks of cattle, goats and even dogs.

Here follows the recipe for subjection of the spirit Karinkutti into one's service. Of course each spirit is treated always in a totally different way. First you bury a dead black or reddish buffalo. You must not catch your buffalo and kill him. You must find him dead. If you say this is far from easy, I can only remark that the subjection of an evil spirit is not an easy matter. Having buried your buffalo—assuming for the moment that you are a magician, such as the instructions are intended for—you bathe, and while your cloths are wet and clinging to your body, draw the figure chakram, which corresponds to a magic circle, on the ground over the buried buffalo. The

---

* I am not sure that the correct name is here given for this plant. It may be Alpinia Allughas, the aromatic rhizomes of which are used by natives medicinally.

† For this note, too, I thank Mr. Balakrishna Nâyar.

APPENDIX A. 564

The account of the funeral ceremonies which has been given 764
is not, of course, full and accurate as regards all the clans; but [184]
it is precise as regards one, and suffices for the present to give
a clear idea of the ceremonies as performed by all. There are many interesting features in the ceremonies as performed by the Kiriattil clan. Want of space forbids more than the briefest mention of some of these.

Those who carry the corpse to the pyre are dressed as 764
women, their cloths being wet, and each carries a knife on his 613
person. Two junior male members of the Taravâd thrust pieces
of mango wood into the southern end of the burning pyre, and, 564
when they are well lighted, throw them over their shoulders to the southwards without looking round. Close to the northern end of the pyre two small sticks are fixed in the ground, and tied together with a cloth, over which water is poured thrice. All members of the Taravâd prostrate to the ground before the pyre. They follow the Enangru carrying the pot of water round the pyre, and go home without looking round.

They pass to the northern side of the house under an arch made by two men, standing east and west, holding at arms length, and touching at the points, the spade that was used to dig the pit under the pyre, and the axe with which the wood for the pyre was cut or felled.

After this is done the "kodali karma" ceremony, using the spade, the axe and a big knife. These are placed on the leaves where the corpse had lain. Then follows circumambulation and prostration by all; and the leaves are committed to the burning pyre.

613

the lineage they were legally mandatory. The local caste assembly, [623]
with the backing of royal or chiefly authority, could take action [692]
against offenders. Intra-lineage incest was indeed a crime punishable [684]
by death. As a matter of courtesy, lineage members extended appropriate [601]
kinship terms to one another.

Unless it was declining in numbers and had shrunk to the proportions
of a single household, the lineage was not an economic unit.
Its members did not jointly own an estate and did not coöperate in the [474]
production or distribution of goods. These functions accrued to the
small segment of a lineage occupying a single homestead, which I
call a property group. Lineage kin *were* the residual heirs of a [768]
property group which died out. However, such reversion of property
was rare. A property group which had no childbearing women usually [597]
adopted one or more girls from some other branch of the lineage in
order to perpetuate itself.

A "commoner" lineage had no headman. Its oldest man commanded
special respect but he had no legal authority over the lineage as a
whole. The office of headman of the lineage existed only in village [622]
headmen's, chiefly, and royal lineages. Here the political office was
theoretically vested in the eldest man of the lineage, irrespective of
branch. These lineages had a somewhat different structure, discussed
below.

The members of a lineage engaged in coöperative activities at two 613
major life crises: the pre-puberty marriage rite of girls, and the funeral 476
of a member, followed by offerings to the departed spirit on the [588]
fifteenth and sixteenth days after the death. [765]

Both of these occasions involved the caste assembly of the neighborhood
and the institution of linked lineages or *enangar*. The caste [564]
assembly comprised the eldest men (*kāranavar*) of all the property
groups. It met periodically on a mound (tara) near the Bhagavadi [623]
temple of the neighborhood to manage the temple's affairs. It also [692]
judged offenses against the religious laws of the caste.

Each lineage was linked by hereditary ties of ceremonial coöperation to two or three other lineages of the neighborhood. These linkages were reciprocal but not exclusive. For example, lineage A might have as enangar B, C, and D, whereas B might have A, E, and F, and so on. A chain of such relationships therefore linked all lineages of the neighborhood.

The enangar were partners who offered help in a ceremonial manner at all major life crises. They stood as formal links between the lineage and the total neighborhood group, which was called the *enangu*. In

Shortly before or after puberty she might, following the ceremony, 588
enter without religious rites into sexual liaisons with one or more 836
men of her own or an appropriate higher caste. Similarly, a Nayar 564
man (whether or not he had ever performed the tāli rite) might enter 613
into relationships with any number of women of his own or an appropriate
lower Nayar caste.

These marriage customs are further discussed below. Here it is 613
relevant to point only to the role of the *enangan* bridegroom. Since 564
the enangar stood to the lineage as formal representatives of the local 588
caste group, it seems appropriate to interpret the tāli rite as a ceremony 182
of group marriage, in which the caste group as a whole married
the immature girls of the lineage as a whole.

The tāli rite was indeed both a religious and a legal transaction
between the lineage and the enangu or neighborhood group. If a [688]
girl was discovered to have attained puberty before it had been performed,
the assembly forced her property group to expel her and to
perform her funeral rites, for she was thought to be ritually dangerous
to her caste as a whole. For a woman, the tāli which she wore round [885]
her neck until death was therefore a sign that she had been ceremonially
and legally accepted as a mature woman of her lineage and
caste, "cleared" to bear children to perpetuate both groups.

The lineage similarly operated as a unit, and the enangar fulfilled 613
similar roles as formal links with the caste on the occasion of a 564
funeral. All adult males of the lineage who were junior to the deceased 764
attended his cremation, which took place in the southwest
corner of the garden of his house. Representative members of all [783]
enangar households also came to help with practical tasks and to
provide ritual objects for the chief mourner's ceremonies, although
they were forbidden to touch or to receive food from the mourners
throughout their period of pollution. In the fifteen days after the 765
death only the deceased's household, assisted by their special enangar 613
households, took part in the collection of the bones and ashes and 783
made offerings to the departed spirit. Other lineage members observed 782
death pollution in their homes and were attended by enangar
there. On the fifteenth day the lineage reassembled at the house of the
dead. After many ceremonies its members were purified by the funeral
priest from the pollution of death. On the sixteenth day final offerings
were made to the spirit. The deceased's household then held a large 613
feast, which was shared by lineage members and representatives from 765
all houses of the linked lineages. This reception of food by the enangar 564
from the hands of the deceased's matrilineal kinsmen marked a 783

613

●564 formal recognition that the bereaved lineage, freed from its death
765 pollution, had been received back into the normal social life of the
783 caste.

613 Lineage members were also united in worship of their lineage
goddess or *dharma devi* ("goddess of moral law"). This goddess,
776 named differently in different lineages, was a species of the common
794 Nayar goddess Bhagavadi. Her idol was housed in a small shrine near
the oldest ancestral house or sometimes in the courtyard of the village
temple. She was believed capable of inflicting or withholding sickness
[782] and all types of misfortune. To ward them off, members
propitiated her with offerings of cooked food every year. The astrologer
might also advise an emergency propitiation. She had the power
[588] to bless women of the lineage with fertility. On this account she was
[842] worshipped before a tāli rite and also at the first menstruation ceremonies
of a girl. In a somewhat vague sense, moreover, lineage members
appear to have felt themselves collectively responsible to the
[753] goddess for sins or ritual lapses on the part of one of them. It was believed
that if any member failed to observe the religious laws of
[826] caste, to perform household duties correctly, or to revere the goddess,
[784] she might bring sickness or misfortune upon the lineage as a whole.

613 In spite of this sense of collective moral responsibility, the evidence
is unclear as to whether the lineage as a whole was held legally
681 responsible for any of its member's acts. It is true that the enangar
564 were the legal representatives of the local caste unit in its relations
with the lineage. This inter-lineage relationship was hereditary and
obligatory. It could not be entered into or permanently broken without
the consent of the assembly and the chief of the district. If,
moreover, an individual infringed a religious law of the caste, it was
[692] the duty of his lineage's enangar to summon a caste assembly to judge
[823] and punish the offense. Crimes, which were also sins, against caste
law included incest within the lineage; dining or sex relations with
prohibited lower-caste persons; failure to perform the marriage rite
of a girl before she reached puberty; failure to observe pollution at
the birth or death of a lineage member or (on the part of an individual
woman) during menstruation; failure to pay dues in kind
to the Nayar temple of the neighborhood. On being apprized of an
offense, the assembly's first recourse was temporarily to ostracize the
offender's household from the caste community. Ostracism meant
that the offenders might not enter the temple, bathe in public bathing
pools, enter the houses of other Nayars, employ the village servant

613
castes, or receive customary help from their enangar at life-crisis 681
ceremonies. If the ostracism was not effected it was believed that the 564
whole neighborhood would fall into disfavor with the caste goddess [784]
and might become prey to epidemic or crop failure.

The point on which I am uncertain is whether the lineage as a 613
whole was ostracized, or whether other branches of the lineage
normally retained their caste status by severing their own connections 681
with the offender's property group. The latter actually occurred in a 684
case in Cochin in 1924. A Sudra Nayar woman had sex relations with 564
a man of the caste of Nayar funeral priests. Shortly after the assembly
met, the other houses of her lineage repudiated all connection with
the offender's household, which alone remained ostracized for a year.
The woman and her lover then fled to Malaya. The household paid its
fine and was reaccepted to caste. I do not know whether it was possible
under native rule for a lineage to repudiate its responsibilities
in this way.

Minor offenses, such as dining with low-caste people, were settled 613
by the offender's property group paying a fine to the village temple. 681
The offender and his household were purified from their pollution by 564
certain ritual acts. They then gave a feast to their enanger at which
they were publicly reaccepted to caste. Traditionally, graver offenses [783]
(such as the one above) met harsher penalties. The caste's judgment [574]
on such an offense traditionally had to be ratified by the district
chief or by a royal officer. The offender was then either executed by
his immediate matrilineal kin or surrendered to the king for sale into
slavery. His household members performed his funeral rites and only
then were they taken back into caste.

Whether or not the lineage as a whole was held collectively responsible
for offenses against the religious law of the caste, it was
not held responsible for civil wrongs judged by the village headman
or for crimes judged by the chief or by officers of the royal court. The
property group, headed by its kāranavan, and not the whole lineage,
was responsible in cases of theft, debt, or other offenses concerning
property which were judged by the village headman. With regard to 613
a major crime, a Nayar who murdered another was tried in the court
of the king or of a higher chief. If the murdered man was of the same 682
or a higher caste than the murderer, the murderer was executed by a [696]
small group of Nayars selected by the judge. If the murdered man was
of lower caste, the murderer's property group had to pay a fine to
the district chief. Again, if a Nayar of any rank committed treason etc

individual basis, but this money seems only to have sufficed for their 613
food and other necessities while on the march or on service in towns. 592
When they were at home in their villages their kāranavan assumed [465]
responsibility for each man's customary gifts to his wives in other [431]
households.

Within his own household the kāranavan personally allocated their 613
subsistence to its members. Every few weeks he transferred quantities 592
of unhusked rice, vegetables, and other stores from the granary to 511
storerooms inside the house. They were then usually taken over by the eldest woman, who kept keys to the storerooms and chests and allocated daily supplies to the kitchen. In property groups with more than one homestead the kāranavan delivered quantities of paddy, salt, and coconut oil twice annually to each house according to the number of its members. Each house sent a person daily to the ancestral house to bring fresh vegetables, milk, buttermilk, and other perishable foods. In all taravāds the kāranavan controlled purchases from the town. Twice a year—at New Year and at the harvest festival—he distributed clothing to both male and female members.

Virtuous kāranavans were those who managed the daily affairs of 613
the taravād with thrift, justice, and meticulous care, but who, through 592
judicious planning, were able to lavish grand feasts upon caste mem- 574
bers, tenants, village servants, and serfs at the major life-crisis rites. An aged kāranavan would enumerate with satisfaction the various feasts at funerals, tāli rites, and first-menstruation ceremonies which he had satisfactorily conducted. Each of the servant castes contributed appropriate goods or services in advance of these feasts, and each Nayar house reciprocated the hospitality when its own life-crisis rites came round. Besides reaffirming in a ceremonial manner the different types of ties between Nayars and between Nayars and the lower castes, the life-crisis ceremonies seem to have stimulated production and provided suitable foci for acts of economic redistribution and reciprocity.

The amounts of time spent by junior men of the taravād on different 613
activities are no longer clearly known. We know however that at the 868
age of seven a boy was inducted into military training in the village [902]
gymnasium; this training persists in a few villages, and includes fencing, wrestling, rigorous exercise, and very strenuous massage. Tradi- [564]
tionally, Nayars also learned archery from a special caste of village
servants (Vil Kurups). For a part of their time they attended a vil- [875]
lage school run by yet another caste of schoolteachers (Eruttac- [872]
chans); almost all adult Nayar men and most women were literate [212]

group supported each other firmly in disputes with other property 593
groups of the lineage, while the men of a lineage were expected to 578
defend each other to the death in outbreaks of violence against other
lineages.

Inter-segmental conflicts between classificatory brothers, or be-
tween the men of a sibling group and their mother's classificatory
brothers, eventually led to division of the taravād. This could not,
however, take place until the men of all generations senior to the
disputants were dead. As long as the taravād was obliged to cohere,
the formalities associated with age rank between men countered
incipient tendencies to segmentary fission. Men were ranked by age 593
irrespective of segment and generation, and the same etiquette of 561
formality and partial avoidance was due an elder own brother as to
an elder classificatory brother. Thus the etiquette of age rank not 578
only reduced the dangers of open violence between individual
"brothers" of any degree of relationship; it also *enforced* estrange-
ment and social distance between full brothers, who in some contexts
might otherwise have huddled together in unseemly amity to plot
against their classificatory brothers in other segments of the property
group.

SISTERS

Sisters shared many experiences and interests. They played together 593
in childhood and often experienced the tāli ceremony together. As
adults they cooked, swept, pounded paddy, harvested, and cared for
babies together. Women were in some respects ranked on the basis
of age in the same manner as men. All who were older had some [561]
authority over all who were younger. A younger sister was not per-
mitted to receive a visiting husband until after one had appeared to
claim her elder sister's or elder classificatory sister's favors.

However, the age ranking and authority structure between women 593
was less formal than that between men. Women had no legal authority 562
over one another. All women of a household were legal minors, col- [592]
lectively under the authority of the men of their household, repre-
sented by their kāranavan. Women had no place in the caste as- [564]
sembly and might not give evidence in trials. Disputes between [623]
women of different households or different lineages were not con-
sidered serious matters for public consideration. Women could not [578]
legally represent their households in relationships with other house-
holds, other castes, or political authorities.

For these reasons older women had only moral authority over 593
juniors. They could not enforce their decisions except by appeal

613 If he wished, a girl's ritual bridegroom might later visit her as one
588 of a series of husbands, but he had no prior claims and was not
765 obliged to do so. The woman in turn owed no obligations to him
except that at his death, she and all her children by whatever biological
983 fathers must observe fifteen days of ritual pollution for him.
Ritual pollution was otherwise observed only for matrilineal kin.
Until modern times it was not observed by a woman and her children
for a visiting husband who was not also the woman's ritual husband.
601 In addition, if they knew him, a woman's children called her ritual
husband by the Dravidian word *appan*, the term used for the father
in the patrilineal castes. Their mother's visiting husbands they called
by the Sanskrit term *acchan;* this word means "leader" or "lord" and
was also sometimes applied as a title to village headmen and military
leaders.

836 After the tāli rite and shortly before or after puberty, a woman
might enter into a number of sexual relationships with men of her
837 local caste group or of an appropriate higher caste. Similarly, a Nayar
564 might visit a number of wives of his own or an appropriate lower
Nayar caste. Among retainer Nayars, by far the majority of unions
were between persons of the same caste. A very few favored women
had husbands from the lineages of temple servants, village headmen,
chiefs, or royalty, or from houses of Nambudiri Brahmans of relatively
low rank. A smaller number of Nayar retainers had wives in the lower-ranking
castes of Nayar temple menials, but not in the servant castes
of Nayar washermen and barbers, which were endogamous.

595 It is not certain how many husbands a woman might have at one
837 time; various writers [8] of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries mention
between three and twelve (Logan, 1951, I: 136–137). Others add that
175 women "never refused themselves" to occasional Brahman or Nayar
visitors of appropriate rank. It seems probable that each woman had
a small number of husbands from her local caste group who, while
their relationship lasted, visited her regularly, but that women also
received occasional fleeting visits from itinerant Nayars of appropriate
rank, perhaps mainly during military operations.

---

113 [8] See, for example, Abdu 'r Razzak (1441), Nicolo di Conti (1444), Hieronimo de Santo Stephano (1563), and Cæsar Fredericke (1563), in Hakluyt Society Publications Vol. 22, 1857; Duarte Barbosa (1518) and Joao de Barros (early sixteenth century) in Dames, 1921, II: 124, 241; Ludovico di Varthema (1503–1508), tr. J. W. Jones, 1863; 146; Zein-ud-Deen (1579), tr. Rowlandson, 1833: 63; J. H. van Linschoten (1596) in Hakluyt Society Publications Vol. 71: 279; Pietro della Valle (1624), Hakluyt Society Publications Vol. 85: 579; Hamilton (1727), ed. Penzer, 1930, I: 310; Buchanan, 1807, II: 411.

843
595 paternity. This they did by making gifts to the woman herself and
to the midwife immediately after the birth. Any man who had visited
431 the woman in the appropriate time period was required to make
these gifts. If a man refused, he could be called upon by the caste
assembly to fulfill his obligation. The gifts comprised two new
lower cloths for the mother and one cloth and a quantity of paddy
as payment to the Nayar woman barber who attended at the delivery.
843 Again, these gifts were clearly legal and ceremonial tokens
595 rather than objects of substantial economic value. Legally, however,
their transfer was of the utmost significance. For if no man would
431 consent to make the delivery payments, the woman was assumed to
684 have had sex relations with a man of lower caste or with a Muslim
or a Christian. Her caste assembly would temporarily excommunicate
her taravād until she and her child had been driven out by their
kāranavan and the woman's funeral rites had been performed. The
woman, presumably with her child, might be executed by her
matrilineal kinsmen or allowed to become a slave of the district chief
or the king. If the woman and her lover were publicly exposed even
before the birth of the child, both might be put to death.

595 A woman had no obligations to her husbands other than the
593 granting of sexual privileges. Nayar husbands of the woman's own
caste occasionally dined in her household but this was a favor and
● 564 not a right. Nayar households sometimes provided uncooked food
and a separate building for Brahman or chiefly husbands, but this
again seems to have been a matter of courtesy rather than of obligation.
[431] Husbands of higher caste made the same gifts to their wives
as did Nayar husbands.

595 In the nineteenth century her kāranavan selected a woman's first
584 husband, and he may have done so at earlier periods. Until the
1930's many kāranavans also retained the right to dismiss a husband
586 who displeased them. It seems improbable, however, that a woman
613 or her kāranavan would ever refuse the visits of a Brahman, chief, or
village headman of powerful standing in the community. In some
[837] cases also a husband of higher caste seems to have monopolized the
[564] favors of a Nayar woman, a privilege not accorded to men of her own
caste. K. Kannan Nair reported (1908: 186) that until a century
previously local chiefs sometimes compelled a woman to receive as
husbands those of her enangar who wished to marry her. In general,
however, women seem to have been free to reject particular men, and
both men and women to terminate liaisons without formality.

000 In all possible respects attempts seem to have been made to reduce

593
595

754 particular marriage, for the spouses, unable to bear the machinations
613 of their relatives, would often end their relationship.

586 I have called these Nayar institutions "marriage" because they limited and regulated sexual relationships and because they served
581 to legitimize children. The provisions of both the tāli rite and the
588 sambandham were directed toward these ends. The tāli rite was both a legal and a ritual institution. First, it symbolically conferred sexual and procreative powers upon the girl. The mock menstrual seclusion, the rites to the fertility goddess, and the "defloration" all indicate this. Second, it took the sexual rights in a girl away from her matrilineal kinsmen as soon as they had been conferred. This appears in that the
[835] girl and her elder matrilineal kinsmen must observe the rules of etiquette associated with incest prohibitions from the day of the tāli rite. Third, it transferred the sexual (but not the procreative) rights in the girl to a representative of her caste in the person of an enangan. Fourth, however, this man at once renounced his rights in his capacity as an individual, after which they became available to men of the caste, and of appropriate higher castes, as a group. All of this was accomplished in good time *before* the girl actually attained puberty and was capable of entering fruitfully into sexual liaisons. It
[834] was strictly forbidden for a man to have relations with a girl before her tāli rite, and if the rite was not performed before puberty she was expelled from caste.

595 With regard to the sambandham institution, sex relations were not
834 promiscuous. They were forbidden within the lineage, within a certain range of affines (discussed below), and, most categorically,
851 with men of lower caste. It was therefore necessary to have some procedure for legitimizing children, to show that they had been fathered by men standing in the appropriate roles. The legally obligatory payments by husbands at the time of birth accomplished this, and if no one could be found to make the payments, the woman and child were expelled from the caste.

595 It was appropriate that a woman should wear the tāli throughout her life and that she and her children should observe death pollution
[765] for the ritual husband rather than for any particular visiting husbands.
[783] For neither the ritual husband nor the visiting husbands had rights in the woman *as individuals*, nor had the woman or her children in-
[564] dividual rights in them. After renouncing his individual rights, however, the ritual husband remained for life, in relation to this woman, the representative of his caste, which in law had collectively married her and collectively fathered her children.

58 85 121 As a form of group marriage, the Nayar institutions clearly will not fit the definition of marriage proposed in *Notes and Queries in Anthropology.*[9] It did, however, legitimize children, which seems to me the minimum necessary criterion applicable to all those unions which anthropologists customarily label "marriage." As a new definition of marriage which will cover all the familiar types, the Nayar case, and several other unusual cases which are commonly recognized as marriage, I have suggested the following: "Marriage is a relationship between a woman and one or more other persons which provides that a child born to the woman, under circumstances not prohibited by the rules of the relationship, shall be accorded full birth-status rights in his society or social stratum" (Gough, 1959: 32).

582 Nayar men seem always to have chosen wives younger than themselves. A man ranked above his wife, who had to show respect to him.
593 In the presence of her kin she remained standing before him
576 and seldom spoke to him; she would not be seen talking to him in
[551] public outside her home. A woman never used her husband's name; she addressed and referred to him by plural honorific pronouns. Hypergamous marriage relationships were even more formal than
[564] those between Nayars. Caste rules of pollution prevented the husband
[183] from receiving food from his wife's kinsfolk. During the daytime, after taking his purifying bath in the morning, he was forbidden to touch her or any member of her family.

THE FATHER AND HIS KIN

595 The most peculiar characteristic of the Central Nayars is that although a form of marriage existed they did not institutionalize the elementary family of one man, one woman, and their children. This group was in no sense a legal, residential, commensal, productive, or distributive unit. An individual man had no legal rights in a particular wife and her children. He did not reside with them, did not eat regularly with them, did not produce with or for them, and he did
[851] not customarily distribute goods to his children. A woman had no legal rights in a particular man—only the right that one *or more* men admit paternity of her children. Similarly, a child correctly begotten was assured of legal paternity, but a group of men might fulfill this role and the child had no subsequent claims on any of them. It might perhaps be claimed that the group composed of the tāli tier, his ritual wife, and her children born subsequently received cere-

---

[9] "Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are the legitimate offspring of both parents" (*Notes and Queries*, 1951: 110).

595 monial recognition through the performance of death pollution, but that was strictly all.

842 Nayars did, however, understand and attach significance to the physiological role of the male in procreation. They expected a child [829] to resemble his genitor and to be unusually intelligent if his father were a Brahman or a Nayar aristocrat. A man is said to have been 593 especially fond of a child whom he knew with reasonable certainty to be his own. He would make small gifts to him, play with him on visits, and offer him friendly counsel as he grew older. However, a man had no right to interfere in any way in his child's training, and [586] the child had no customary obligations to him. If he ended his relationship with the mother he had no further contact with the child.

Children addressed all their mothers' husbands as acchan, adding [601] the caste title in the case of a father of higher caste. Both boys and girls stood in the father's presence and accorded him respect, but [564] without the extreme submissiveness due to an older matrilineal kinsman. In spite of the Malayāli adage "No Nayar knows his father," it seems probable that almost every Nayar regarded some particular man as his genitor; but his relationship with this man might be anything from a permanent, warm attachment to almost total lack of recognition. Certainly differences of paternity created no institutionalized divisions within a sibling group.

602 No rights or obligations existed between an individual and his patrilateral kin. These relationships, when they existed, were a matter of individual friendliness or of polite etiquette. A person might visit his or her father's taravād as long as the father's marriage to the mother endured, especially if the father lived close by. How- [595] ever, although marriage has been monogamous for the past seventy to eighty years, I found in one Cochin village in 1949 that only 48 per cent of sibling groups containing children under fifteen had any contact with their father's matrilineal kin. In the other cases patrilateral relationships were suspended because the father lived at a distance, because he had divorced the mother, or because his kinswomen had quarreled with the mother.

[601] In what follows, the term "father" refers to any husband of the mother in the sambandham relationship, and the term "patrilateral kin," to the matrilineal kin of such a man.

Patrilateral kin of the father's generation or older were accorded [605] friendly respect. Cross cousins of the same sex and caste had a familiar, mildly joking relationship if they maintained contact with one another. If their families remained friendly, cross cousins of

613 597 eage with which one was neither at enmity nor in regular asymmetrical political relationships. Thus the Travancore royal lineage several times adopted from Kolattiri, at the other end of Kerala, and the Calicut lineage from Nileswaram, the northernmost independent chiefdom of the Malabar Coast.

613 262 ●564 The giving and receiving of food, normally a hallmark of caste ranking, presented other problems. Some royal lineages were vegetarians and employed Nambudiri Brahman cooks who, being ritually higher than themselves, were permitted to serve them with food. Others seem to have drawn to themselves a small group of lineages as cooks and houseservants upon whom they conferred equivalence of caste rank, while maintaining them as their social inferiors and not intermarrying with them.

613 RESIDENCE AND KINSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

592 593 554 The property groups of village headmen's and chiefly lineages had residential arrangements similar to those of retainer Nayars, except that their houses were larger. The men of these groups visited their lower-ranking wives in the latters' homes. If they lived nearby, visits would occur at night; if at a distance, the husband might visit his wife about once a month and remain for two or three days. Similarly, women of these groups received visits from their higher-ranking husbands at convenient intervals. If he came from a distance the husband brought his own servants and cook, occupied a building near the taravād house, and stayed at his conjugal family's expense.

613 344 554 592 In the royal lineages each property group occupied a large palace. Within it each princess had her own suite of rooms in company with her children under the age of fifteen. Princes over this age had private rooms in a separate wing. The Nambudiri Brahman husbands of princesses (who were younger sons in their own households and had no managerial duties) lived at the palace for the duration of their marriages and were maintained at its expense. In the daytime they occupied a building within the royal courtyard, with its own bathing pool, kitchen, and servants, and visited their wives' rooms mainly at night. Junior princes visited their wives in nearby retainers' households or in more distant chiefly taravāds. Each royal sthāni had his own palace, estate, and retainers for the duration of his office. He would normally bequeath a house to a Nayar wife within the palace grounds and visit her and his children there.

595 554 [586] Although group marriage appears to have existed in theory among aristocrats, polyandry was in fact perhaps less common than among retainer Nayars. Princesses are said to have been sometimes poly-

androus and divorce was freely practiced, but a princess probably did 595
not regularly entertain more than one husband at a time. Older Nambudiri 554
Brahman husbands often introduced their own younger kinsmen [566]
into the palace; for this reason both matrilateral cross-cousin marriage and paternal parallel-cousin marriage were common in Brahman-royal unions. Princes, chiefs, and high-ranking Nambudiri Brahmans were sometimes polygynous. Their wives, however, were probably seldom polyandrous; for aristocrats seem often to have exercised the power to monopolize the attentions of their favorite Nayar wives. They were therefore more sure of the paternity of their Nayar sons, upon whom they sometimes conferred military or political offices.

In all hypergamous unions the husband observed the normal all-India 564
caste rules of pollution except with regard to sexual intercourse. 602
He might not receive food from his wife's caste and had little communication 598
with her or her children in the daytime. Affinal relationships 554
were correspondingly more restricted than in the retainer castes,
for a woman had very little communication with her husband's natal [833]
kin; she and her children used no kinship terms for them. If the wife [783]
was of lower social as well as ritual rank than the husband she did not visit his natal home. Conversely, princesses do not seem to have demeaned themselves socially by visiting the homes of their ritually higher-ranking husbands. A Nayar wife who was of similar social rank to her Brahman or temple-servant husband might occasionally visit the womenfolk of his home, but she was received in an outbuilding and might not eat with them. Similarly, husbands in hypergamous unions had highly formalized and restricted relationships with the matrilineal kinsmen of their wives. The wives' elder kinsmen were accorded the respect due their age; the husband, that due his superior ritual rank.

Relationships between matrilineal kin among the aristocrats were a 602
sharpened version of those found among retainer Nayars. Between 576
men, the etiquette associated with age rank was highly stereotyped. 554
Among the senior princes who were likely to compete for political office it reached the point of avoidance, a condition facilitated by their separate residences as sthānis. The etiquette of respect was similarly elaborated between men and women. After the age of fifteen a prince might converse with older women of his palace only by appointment and in some public place. He must scrupulously avoid the
presence of younger kinswomen from the time of their *tāli* rite. In [154]
the potentially larger property groups of the aristocrats these rules [835]
of etiquette obviously militated against the expression of aggression
between men as well as preventing incestuous relations between the sexes.

601 corrupted to *chēdatti amma* (Cochin) or *eratti amma* (S. Malabar).

(9) *Chētan.* M. and F. speaking, reference; M. speaking only, address. A particular shortened form of *jyēshtan* (ElBr), reserved for the husband of A6.

(10) *Makan.* M. speaking. Son of ego's wife. Reference only.

(11) *Makal.* M. speaking. Daughter of ego's wife. Reference only.

(12) *Pērakutti.* M. speaking. Child of ego's wife's daughter. Reference only. Not always used.

(13) *Appan.* M. and F. speaking. Ritual husband (*tāli* tier) of ego's mother.

(14) *Manavalan.* F. speaking. Ritual husband. Reference only.

All other affines and cognates were referred to by descriptive compound terms (e.g., *ende acchande marumakan,* "my father's nephew"; *ende anujande bhārya,* "my younger brother's wife"). Persons of 8 and 9 were also often referred to by descriptive compound terms.

601 A man might *address* his wife's matrilineal kin older than himself
602 by the same terms as she did but he was not obliged to do so. He
[551] might also address them by their names and caste titles. They addressed him by his personal name, adding the caste title if he were of
● [564] higher caste.

A man addressed his wife's younger matrilineal kinsmen by name. Because of the avoidance relationship he and his wife's younger sisters used no terms or names to address each other.

If she knew them and was of the same caste as they were, a woman addressed her husband's older matrilineal relatives by the same terms as he did. She addressed by name those younger than herself. She called her husband's younger sister who was older than herself *jyēshtatti,* (elder sister). Because of the avoidance relationship no terms or names were used between a woman and her husband's brothers who were older than she.

In hypergamous marriages a woman and her husband's natal kin used no terms to address each other.

An individual used no terms, but only names, to address his father's matrilineal kin.

601 *Comment:* In general, the restricted use of reference terms for
affines and the lack of terms for patrilateral kin other than the father
[581] reflect the slenderness of the marriage tie and the lack of obligations
to these kin.

Affinal terms were mainly restricted to the spouses of ego's older matrilineal kin, persons with whom he had fairly regular contact. Even these, however, might be *referred* to by descriptive compound

439 food and other goods. The population expanded and much formerly
[161] waste land was brought under cultivation as gardens for the produc-
tion of coconuts, pepper, cashew nuts, and cinnamon. Higher in the
[241] mountains Europeans developed estates of tea, coffee, and spices,
[464] which attracted wage labor from villages to the west. The develop-
ment of the steamship, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and
[496] the entry of railways into Kerala in the 1860's were significant events
in this process.

● 564

Political and Economic Systems

[566] Traditionally, a hierarchy of the major Hindu castes was present as
in Central Kerala, except that large areas of North Kerala had no
Pulayas or agricultural serfs (*ibid.*, I: 148). Nambudiri Brahmans
were fewer than in Central Kerala, but they controlled a small num-
ber of temple estates and claimed religious superiority over the Nayar
439 rulers. Muslims were the dominant trading population of the ports
563 and inland trading centers.

631 The mountainous terrain, heavy rainfall, poor communications,
sparse population, and comparatively low productivity made politi-
cal centralization more difficult than in Central Kerala. The ancient
Kolattiri kingdom was divided into chiefdoms and villages in a man-
ner similar to the later kingdom of the Zamorin, but judicial con-
trol was perhaps never as well centralized as in the Calicut kingdom.
175 From the fourteenth century, when the Zamorins captured most of
635 the Arab trade, the Kolattiri kingship lost some of its former power.
The kingdom disintegrated into three smaller, virtually independent
[634] kingdoms—Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad—plus a number
of small border chiefdoms of uncertain allegiance (*ibid.*, I: 343–344).
174 Each of the three North Kerala kingdoms probably had a population
161 of between 150,000 and 250,000, in contrast to the Calicut kingdom,
635 which seems to have numbered some 600,000 to 720,000 (see note
5, page 473).

175 After 1500 each of the North Kerala rulers sought the help of one
648 or another of the mutually hostile European and Middle Eastern trad-
634 ing powers, thus maintaining a state of fragmentation until the My-
634 sorean conquest. In the struggles of the seventeenth and eighteenth
635 centuries some new Nayar chiefs also arose with mushroom rapidity
on the basis of European support and gained partially autonomous
sway over small groups of villages. Political and social mobility among
Nayar aristocrats was thus more marked in North Kerala than in the
more stable central kingdoms. Indeed, a North Kerala proverb re-

175

marks that "When a high-caste Nayar becomes ripe, he turns into a 648 634
king." 635

Low productivity and poor communications perhaps made the exaction
of tribute more difficult than in Central Kerala, and this fact, 621
plus the uncertain nature of trade, made the local rulers perennially 634
short of funds. This is probably the reason why, although they were [651]
trained for warfare in gymnasia in their villages, Nayars were not
regularly conscripted into a national army. Instead, they merely fought [701]
sporadically on behalf of local chiefs. Further, chiefs and village headmen [622]
were insufficiently strong to bring all the land under their control.
Their domains were larger than those of Nayar commoners, but [613]
most commoner Nayar property groups were independent small landlords
in their own right within their villages. Since they were not [592]
full-time warriors and since in many areas they had no serfs, Nayar [423]
commoners also did part of their own cultivation on their small estates. [241]
Part of their land, however, they leased to Tiyyar tenants as in
Central Kerala. The polluting castes of village servants had the same [427]
rights and spatial distribution as in Central Kerala. In general, the [564]
economic processes of reciprocity and redistribution in villages proceeded [437]
in a comparable manner.

As independent warrior-cultivators, the Nayar commoners were not 564 ●
divided into separate castes of retainers owing allegiance as vassals 621
and *kānam* tenants to different kinds of lords. Most villages were nominally
under Nayar village headmen. In villages of the Kottayam and 613
Kadattunad kingdoms, both the headman's lineage and those of the 582
Nayar commoners belonged to a large caste called Nambiars, who appear to have intermarried throughout the kingdom. Although of the same general caste as commoners, and not forbidden by religious law from intermarrying equally with commoners, Nambiar village headmen's lineages tended, however, to intermarry only with each other or to take wives only from the commoners, occasionally giving their own women in marriage to chiefs or Brahmans. Chiefs claimed a higher caste rank as Samantan Nambiars, and royalty as Kshattriyas. These aristocratic lineages conducted hypergamous marriages with each other and with Nambudiris as in Central Kerela.

Judicial processes were somewhat less centralized than in the 692
Central kingdoms. At least in theory, grave crimes and civil disputes in urban centers seem to have been tried in royal courts, but most civil disputes inland were apparently tried by local chiefs. Under the chiefs, caste assemblies of neighborhoods took care of crimes against
religious law as in the Central kingdoms. Murder among Nayars 000

627 Murder among the Nayars
sometimes led to blood feuds between lineages (*ibid.*, I: 195–198).
613 Chiefs could usually cut short a feud between commoner lineages, but
628 even these feuds occasionally ran their course for a generation, although
cognatic and affinal ties between lineages helped to bring
them to a close. Greater feuds were sometimes waged between the
lineages of village headmen or chiefs of adjacent districts, in which
the commoner Nayars of each area might participate.

Matrilineal Units

THE CLAN

614 564 ● Among Nambiar commoners the largest matrilineal unit was the clan
(*vamsham* or *illam*). It had the functions of exogamy and mutual
hospitality. Common descent was merely stipulated and not demonstrated
and the order of segmentation within the clan was unknown.
[635] The clan might be dispersed throughout a kingdom or even, perhaps,
between kingdoms. Its members might point to a particular village as
their original ancestral site, but each clan seems to have been much
older and its history less clearly documented than among Nayar retainers
in Central Kerela. There is no doubt that clans became much
more dispersed in the nineteenth century than they had traditionally
been because of the development of new areas of cultivation and increased
mobility between villages. However, even traditionally the
clan seems to have had more members and a wider spread than in the
Central area. Its characteristics may be attributed to several factors.
First, Nambiars were not divided into separate retainer castes. Thus,
although the majority of commoner marriages were within the village,
[582] Nambiars did have greater freedom to marry and move more freely
between villages throughout the realm. Lacking a strong superordinate
political structure and internal caste differentiation to give form
to their relationships, they had larger kinship units. Newcomers to a village
probably did not need to become affiliated to its assembly by order
[608] of a superior political authority. Instead, they could probably affiliate
themselves with their clan fellows and so at once be provided also with
classificatory affines in other clans. Second, Nambiars practised
614 avunculocal residence; husband and wife lived in the husband's
564 matrilineal ancestral house (Buchanan, 1807: 513–514). Sons normally
591 moved back to their own matrilineal homes at puberty, but daughters
[425] moved to their husbands' homes. However, Nambiar fathers occasionally
gave privately acquired land to their wives and children
when they were able. The children might then settle permanently in

the father's village, if this was different from the mother's. In this 614
way, matrilineal kin might become widely scattered between many 564
villages, while remembering the village from which their matrilineal 591
forebears sprang.

THE SUB-CLAN

This group corresponded to the clan in Central Kerala. It was a 614
segment of the clan whose members seem to have been located within [634]
one chiefdom. The structure and functions of this group were identical [765]
with those of the clan in Central Kerala, the members observing death [844]
and birth pollutions as well as exogamy. [783]

THE LINEAGE

As in Central Kerala, the lineage was that portion of a clan located 613
in one neighborhood (tara). Traditionally there seem to have been
about six to ten lineages in one neighborhood, as in Central Kerala.
A lineage was internally segmented and segmentation was relevant
to the reversion of property. Exogamy, the observance of pollution, [783]
and the extension of kinship terms inhered in the lineage. Perhaps
because village headship was weaker than in Calicut and each commoner
lineage stronger as an organized group of kinsfolk, rites connected
with the lineage were more prominent in the North than in
the Center (Gough, 1958). There were few or no neighborhood [346]
temples of Bhagavadi. Instead, each lineage held a grand annual [796]
festival to its own patron Bhagavadi and to minor male deities, in [776]
which the lower castes took part. We have mentioned blood feuds
between lineages, which indicate that a lineage was, in popular [627]
thought, if not in law, considered responsible for its members' physical
protection.

Little is known today of the enangar relationship in North Kerala. 613
It did exist, and enangar are said to have attended life-crisis rites and 588
to have had some function in neighborhood caste trials of offenders
against religious law. However, enangar did not tie the tālis of immature
girls and did not participate in any form of group marriage.
Among Nambiars and in most of the aristocratic Nayar lineages a
girl's tāli was tied before puberty by some local Nambudiri Brahman.
He was often an old man, and he appears to have had no right of
cohabitation. The woman and her children did not observe pollution [765]
at his death. As far as I can judge the tāli rite in this area was merely [783]
an initiation rite which, at least in the nineteenth century, removed
the ritual danger of cohabiting with a virgin (Gough, 1955). It also [835]
instituted the etiquette associated with incest prohibitions between
the girl and her matrilineal kinsmen.

613 THE PROPERTY GROUP

● 564 422 423 The property group, a segment of the lineage, was among Nambiar commoners of roughly the same size and internal composition as among the Nayar retainers of Central Kerala. Its members jointly owned both movable and immovable property in the same manner. Its kāranavan managed the estate, had legal guardianship over members, and was legally responsible for them to the local caste assembly and to the chief. All Nayar property groups appear to have owned some [427] garden and rice lands as *jenmis.* In addition some leased land on kānam tenure from chiefs, royalty, or Brahmans if any were present in their village. A property group whose membership was expanding might bring under cultivation waste land belonging to the chief on a tenure known as *kurikānam.* The tenant had the right of occupancy for twelve years without paying rent; he then paid an annual share of produce to the landlord. The improvements he made (trees, houses, etc.) were his own and he could not be evicted without compensation for them.

613 591 Residence was ideally *avunculocal.* Plural marriages for women were forbidden, and a man normally brought his wife to live with him on his matrilineal estate for the duration of the marriage. This mode of residence was apparently related to population density and to the sexual division of labor. Some duolocal marriages did exist between partners living in nearby houses in the same village. However, houses and villages were so scattered that most men would have had difficulty in maintaining a visiting relationship with a wife. Matrilocal [701] residence was also disadvantageous because men did much of the work of cultivation on their own estates, were required to defend their estates against invaders, and were mobilized by the chiefs in war on the basis of property-group membership. A few junior men lived matrilocally for short periods, but the kāranavan and most of the adult men lived on their own estates.

613 592 [596] In the relatively small property groups of commoners, the dwelling group was thus often an avunculocal extended family. It would comprise a group of brothers, their wives and immature children, their adult sisters' sons, and the wives and small children of these men. Divorced or widowed women born into the property group also had the right of permanent residence there, and married women born into it might return to live there for several weeks or months when they wished.

In the larger property groups of some commoners, village headmen, and chiefs, the main ancestral house might be reserved for

601 184 FaBr, FaSiHu, MoSiHu. The last three are designated "older" or "younger" in the same manner as above.

(8) *Ammāyi.* M. and F. speaking. Wi of any male of first or second ascending generations within ego's lineage, especially within his property group.

(9) *Aliyan.* M. speaking. Reciprocal between a man and Wi's lineage kinsmen of her generation, primarily within her property group. Reference only.

(10) *Jyēshtatti amma.* M. and F. speaking. Wi of older male of ego's generation within his lineage, primarily within his property group.

(11) *Machunian.* M. and F. speaking. Male cross cousin, i.e., male of ego's father's lineage in ego's generation, or So of ego's own, or classificatory MoBr within his lineage. Extended to male cross cousins of either parent.

(12) *Machunichi.* M. and F. speaking. The female equivalent of B11.

(13) *Makan.* M. speaking. WiSo. Reference only.

(14) *Makal.* M. speaking. WiDa. Reference only.

(15) *Pērakutti.* M. and F. speaking. Reciprocal of B4 and B5. Used primarily of own grandchild through either So or Da. Reference only.

[602] A man or woman used the same terms to address the spouse's natal kin as the own natal kin except in case of an avoidance relationship.

[605] An individual *addressed* all cross-cousins in the same manner as siblings, reserving terms B11 and B12 for reference. He addressed and referred to paternal parallel cousins as siblings.

[564] Kinship terms were used in relationships with affines or cognates of higher or lower matrilineal caste but not in relationships with Nambudiri Brahman relatives.

601 602 *Comment:* Males and females of the second ascending generation were equated with grandparents, except for the maternal great-uncle and his wife. This fits the fact that relationships with the maternal great-uncle and his wife were distant and authoritative while those with other kin of this generation were non-authoritative and informal. Similarly, in the first ascending generation the mother's brother and his wife are singled out as distant and authoritative figures. All others of this generation are classed with the parents as non-authoritative figures.

The existence of Iroquois cousin terms for reference fits the special joking relationship and preferential marriage between cross cousins as contrasted with the prohibition of marriage between parallel cousins of both sides.

[PP. 405-745 not Processed]

[P. 446]

CULTS OF THE DEAD AMONG THE NĀYARS

By E. Kathleen Gough

121 In this paper I shall attempt both a sociological and a psychological analysis of Nāyar cults of the dead. That is to say, I shall try to relate the role-structure and social functions of the cults to those of legal and economic institutions, and to relate the emotional content of the cults to that of certain relationships among the living.

613 The Nāyars[1] are a high, matrilineal caste of landholders and salaried workers.
564 Some four to seven matrilineal lineages of commoner Nāyars traditionally occupied
101 the high caste area of a village. They served a Nāyar or Nambūdiri Brahman village
headman, and had authority over tenants, artisans, and serfs of lower caste. The
lineage was exogamous, had a depth of about ten to fifteen generations and was concerned in village government. But the more significant economic unit was a lineage
segment (*taravād*), whose members jointly owned property including an ancestral
house. The eldest man of this group was its legal guardian (*kāranavan*).

635 Before British rule began in 1792, the Malabar Coast comprised a number of
175 kingdoms. I am concerned with Nāyars of villages in the former Cochin kingdom,
in the center of the coast, and with those of villages in the former Kottayam kingdom
121 in the north.

In Cochin, the country was relatively flat, fertile, and densely populated. The
105 Nāyars were the professional military caste. For a part of each year they tended to be
184 absent from the village in military training or war. Women remained on their ancestral
[133] estates under the legal guardianship of the *kāranavan* and were maintained by the
[595] work of tenants and serfs. Probably largely as a result of the relatively mobile military
occupation of the men, plural marital unions were customary. A woman might have
six or eight husbands of her own or a higher subcaste, and a man, any number of
[591] Nāyar wives of his own or a lower subcaste. Residence was duolocal: spouses lived
separately in their natal homes and a husband visited his wife in her home at night.
[851] Exact physiological paternity was, clearly, often unknown, and in any case a man had
[594] no rights in nor obligations to his children. Among Nāyars of this area, therefore,
contrary to Murdock's generalization,[2] the elementary family was not institutionalized
[114] as a legal, economic or residential unit.

In Kottayam, the terrain was mountainous and jungly, the area more sparsely
[133] populated, and the kingdom less centralized. The Nāyars were cultivating landowners
[591] and only occasional warriors. The hilly and jungly terrain and the sparsity of population
made duolocal residence impracticable. In most cases a man took his wife to live in
his ancestral household in avunculocal residence, and children were brought up until
[595] adolescence in the houses of their fathers. There was some polygyny, but polyandry
was forbidden. Fathers had morally though not legally recognized rights in and

obligations to their children and a strong affective bond with them. The *Karanavān* 105
of their lineage segment was however the authority in important matters. 184

Both in Kottayam and in Cochin, Nāyar women were occasionally married to 105
men of the highest, patrilineal caste of Nambūdiri Brahmans. Children of such unions 564
were Nāyars, and rules of ritual pollution maintained distance between them and their
higher caste fathers. The Nambūdiri father might not eat with his wife and children, 582
and might not touch them during the daytime while in a state of ritual purity. Only [184]
the eldest son of a Nambūdiri house might marry a Nambūdiri wife and beget children
for his own family.

British rule brought about the collapse of the Nāyar armies early in the nineteenth 105
century. Probably as a result of this change, plural marriages gradually died out in 177
Cochin. The lineage system persisted with little change until the turn of the century, 178
but in both areas the employment of men in professional and wage work led to the [613]
development of privately owned property in addition to property owned jointly by
the matrilineal group. The Malabar Marriage Act of 1896 permitted men to register [656]
their marriages and gave the children of such marriages rights in half the personal [421]
property of the father after his death. During this century, the greatly increased
employment of men in salaried work, and the development of cash-crop farming, [464]
have brought about a partial disintegration of the matrilineage, and have tended
toward the emergence of the elementary family as an economic and legal unit. Under 105
the pressure of these changes, laws[3] were passed in 1933 and 1937 which required all 177
men to register their marriages, gave rights of maintenance to their wives and children,
and provided that the whole of a man's personal property be inherited by his wife 178
and children. In addition, the laws permitted, though they did not require, equal 421
division of the matrilineal estate on a per caput basis[4] between all members. Although [656]
some traditional households remain, it has now become fairly customary for a woman and her immature children jointly to separate their shares of property from those of the rest of their matrilineal group, and to set up a new establishment with the woman's husband. He, in turn, may have abstracted his single share of property from that of his own matrilineal group. Sometimes, the husband himself provides a new house for his elementary family from his own share of property and his private earnings. Sometimes the new house is provided from the property of the wife and children, who receive their husband and father into it as a resident and wage earner. Sometimes husband and wife pool their property and set up a joint establishment.

Given the modern heterogeneity of legal, economic, and residential arrangements, 769
and given also variations in education, interests, and life experience, it is not surprising 178
that cults of the dead reveal differential rates of change. I shall be chiefly concerned
with the traditional cults, although these persist without change in only a few of the [121]
more traditionally patterned households—actually, in fifteen percent of Nāyar households in one Cochin village, and in thirteen percent in one village in Kottayam.

The Nāyars participate in three distinguishable categories of cults of the dead. 769
The first comprises a collective cult, by the matrilineal property group, of the ghosts
of matrilineal forebears, which I call lineage ghosts. This cult is non-Sanskritic. The 121
second category comprises various kinds of offerings by individuals to the spirits of 613
dead kinsfolk at funerals or on the anniversaries of deaths. These cults are Sanskritic in origin. The third category comprises various cults of the ghosts of persons who were not members of the Nāyar's own lineage; I call these alien ghosts. These cults,

The Killing or assault of a Nayar

outside the lineage led to feuds between lineages or between larger territorial units. 692
In Cochin, the king had more power than in Kottayam to curtail such feuds or confine [628]
them to organized duels for which a fee must be paid. Minor offences against caste
law, such as dining with low caste persons, were tried by the subcaste assembly of the [688]
village and resulted in temporary excommunication of the offender's property group [564]
and the payment of a fine to the village goddess's temple.

The *kāranavan* had the legal right to punish offences within the property group 613
and also those offences against caste law for which the caste held the property group 692
responsible until justice had been done. Incest and murder within the lineage appear [684]
to have been punished by expulsion from the *taravād* by the *kāranavan* and from the [682]
caste by the caste assembly. In cases of grave insubordination by a junior member, the [564]
kāranavan had the right to deny him maintenance or access to the ancestral house
until he mended his behavior.

Thus the supernatural agents of the village and the *taravād* primarily acted to 692
force the human authorities to carry out their judicial duties. If, for example, the 626
caste failed to excommunicate the *taravād* of an individual who had sinned against
its religious laws, it was believed that the village goddess would strike the village with 613
epidemic, flood, or some such misfortune. Similarly, if incest within the lineage went undetected or unpunished, the lineage ghosts and the patron goddess might cause the offenders to die or might bring misfortune on the *taravād* as a whole.

The fact that any member of the *taravād* may suffer as a result of the misdemeanors 613
of any other, carries into the realm of supernatural sanctions the collective responsibility of the *taravād* in social and legal affairs. If a man breaks a ritual rule of the 626
caste, his whole *taravād* is polluted and liable for excommunication. If a death or 783
birth occurs, the whole lineage is temporarily polluted and excluded from normal social life. At the back of these norms lies the fact that the *taravād* is an economic
and legal corporation. Its property is owned jointly, and the *taravād* is responsible [421]
for the debts of any one member. Its male members must support each other in [476]
feuds against other lineages. It is not surprising that the concept of being members
one of another in secular affairs is projected into the realm of mystical retributions. [628]

The points at which supernatural agents might replace, or act instead of, human
authorities, appear to have been those where a subordinate was wronged by one who was 769
himself a powerful authority and could manipulate the law. Thus lineage ghosts were
probably particularly effective in punishing or setting to rights misdemeanors of the 626
kāranavan himself. I am uncertain whether, in traditional law, junior members could 613
sue in court for the deposition of an erring *kāranavan*. They certainly possessed this [694]
right in British law, but even so, it was very difficult before 1933 to get rid of a *kāranavan*. The lineage ghosts appear to have provided important sanctions against a *kāranavan's* misdoings, for they brought misfortune on a *taravād* whose *kāranavan* disgraced
its reputation for hospitality or squandered its property. I was told that the former [787]
custom by which a junior member might be possessed by a ghost and voice its threats
to the *taravād* added force to the complaints of young men who were cheated by
their *kāranavans*. The fact that only the *kāranavan* may propitiate the lineage ghosts [782]
points up both his responsibility to the ghosts to ensure good conduct and prosperity in his *taravād*, and also his responsibility to his juniors to ensure the favor of the ghosts.

I have myself recorded no case in which lineage ghosts were believed to have actually prevented a crime on the part of a *kāranavan*, as distinct from punishing one. V. K.

Nambūdiri Brahn
Tamil AW16
Tanjore Brahmans

T

father is highly ambivalent; for as head of the family he is the source of many frustrations. 769
After death, aggressive elements do seem to appear covertly in the horrifying 593
picture of hell and in the fear that by failing to perform the ancestral rites correctly, 564
and to live piously, the son may imperil his ancestors' souls. But aggression against 783
the parents seems to be too deeply repressed for them to be thought of, alive or dead, as themselves aggressive. Instead, the Brahman seems to effect a reaction formation against his aggression which appears in unusual concern for the ancestors' safety, and in the anxious need to perform numerous rites which will ward off from them the punishment of the god of death. I do not mean to suggest that every Brahman handles aggression toward elders solely and precisely in this way, or that every Nāyar handles the same troublesome impulses by projection. I would suggest, however, that both socialization and belief system encourage these different modes of handling aggression toward authorities, and that a change in any one of these areas would be likely to produce change in them all.

K

A more apt contrast with the Nāyar cult would be that of the Nambūdiri Brahmans, 769
who live in contact with the Nāyars and from whom the Nāyars have derived 564
many elements of their religion. Unfortunately, the religious orthodoxy of the Nambūdiris [114]
prevented me from studying them intimately. The information which I [171]
have from Nambūdiri informants and from literature[16] indicates however that their
ancestral cult is similar to that of the Tamil Brahmans. Its role structure is different, K
for in the Nambūdiri patrilineal household only the eldest son may have Nambūdiri 576
descendants. Younger sons may have Nāyar children, but these are totally excluded 564
from the performance of rites for their dead fathers. Headship of the Nambūdiri 769
family, like that of the Īrava, passes from the eldest son down the line of brothers and then drops to the eldest son of the junior generation. There is both a collective cult of dead patrilineal heads and also separate anniversary rites for individual dead. Both types of ritual take the Sanskritic form. If the deceased was a younger son, his eldest brother's sons perform these rites. Nambūdiris hold the same beliefs about
the fate of the soul as do Tamil Brahmans and, like them, deny that the spirits of K
ancestors are punitive. The informal intimacy of behavior between men of senior T
and junior generations in the Nambūdiri household is also very similar to that among [602]
Tamil Brahmans, and contrasts with the formal etiquette of partial avoidance between
Nāyar matrilineal kinsmen. It is somewhat extraordinary and interesting to note T
that the Nambūdiri Brahmans and the Nāyars, through centuries of close proximity K 602
and hypergamous marital unions, have retained totally different legal and emotional 769
relationships within their respective unilineal units, with correspondingly different beliefs connected with their ancestral cults.

K

Although the Nāyars' relationships with ghosts are similar in important respects to 769
those with living elders, they are significantly different in others. The ghosts' powers are 593
not limited by the demands of reality, and they can magically protect and punish in
fantastic ways in which human elders cannot. As Fortes points out for the Tallensi K
ancestors, the ghosts appear "as a standardized and highly elaborated picture of the [171]
parents as they might appear to a young child in real life—mystically omnipotent, capricious, vindictive, and yet beneficent."[17] It is while a child is comparatively helpless
that his elders appear in this form. As he grows up and gains competence, the elders K
shrink to human proportions. But in some areas of living a Nāyar was traditionally 769
helpless throughout life—with regard to flood and drought, many sicknesses, and 731

Nambūdiri Brahmans

769
731 crop and cattle blight. These he continued to explain in terms of a childlike picture of powerful supernatural elders.

It must also be noticed that although there are slight differences in the relation-
769 ships of men and women to lineage ghosts, the ghosts are, in general, far more alike
783 than are matrilineal elders. A man's relation with his mother is very different from
154 that with his mother's brother, and his relations with different mother's brothers are
[562] by no means uniform. Yet the ghosts are collectively regarded as both protective and dangerously punitive. It seems probable, therefore, that a Nāyar reprojects his own supergo onto the standardized, institutionalized image of lineage ghosts which his culture provides him. For the superego, like the ghosts, is a composite of the prohibitions imposed by a number of elders. The superego is also formed in part from the individual's own aggression, which he defends against by projecting it upon the generalized parental image which he has internalized. If this view is correct, reprojection of the harsh superego onto ghosts in times of misfortune must serve to reduce guilt. For the offences which the ghosts ostensibly punish with sickness are often inadvertent or trivial ones, such as failure in the correct performance of rites. The astrologer's diagnosis may thus permit him to focus his generalized guilt (concerning deeper, unconscious aggressive impulses) upon a specific, minor lapse of duty on the part of
[782] himself or one of his kinsmen. He is then able to take practical steps to alleviate his guilt through propitiation of the supernatural agents. The Brahman's offerings on behalf of his ancestors also seem to serve as an alleviation of guilt, but in a different manner. For instead of reprojecting his harsh superego onto ancestral figures, the Brahman apparently projects it wholly outside the area of human relations onto a vindictive god of death, whose hell he believes endangers both his own and his parents' souls. He appears to alleviate his guilt through rites designed to preserve them and himself from this fate.

769 If it is true that the Nāyar reprojects his own superego upon the lineage ghosts,
182 this would explain why the ghosts are so much more punitive than are living elders.
626 They are thus fitting agents for the infliction of natural misfortunes, which in fact fall more heavily and capriciously than do the punishments of living elders. The fact that all members of the *taravād* are enabled to focus projected aggression and guilt feelings upon the ghosts probably enhances the internal solidarity of the *taravād*, by lifting a portion of these troublesome feelings from inside to outside the group. The cult thus brings together in rites of propitiation these very kinsmen who (in one aspect of their relationship) hate each other, and forges renewed bonds of mutual devotion in the appeasement of beings whom all of them fear.

FUNERALS AND ANNIVERSARIES: THE SANSKRITIC CULTS

76 Although they retained the non-Sanskritic cults of ghosts, the Nāyars long ago
184 adopted many Brahmanical usages in connection with funerals and with rites on the
564 anniversary of a death. Such usages include cremation rather than burial of the dead, and offerings of rice balls (*bali*), water, and other oblations in the days of pollution following a death. As among Nambūdiri Brahmans, the chief heir, at the end of the period of pollution, enters a period of ascetic mourning (*dīkṣā*) for one year in Cochin and for forty-one days in Kottayam. At the end of this time he may dispose of the bones and ashes in a sacred river. He makes *bali* offerings to the spirit on each day of his mourning, and at its close, performs final offerings which unite the deceased with

Nambūdiri Brahmans

76

his forebears. Thereafter he offers rice balls and other oblations in a *śrāddham* ceremony 184
on each anniversary of the death. 564

Many of these customs are of long standing among the Nāyars. Barbosa[18] reported in 1518 that Nāyar royalty observed *dīkṣā* for the dead in the same manner as Nambūdiris. Sheikh Zein-ud-Deen[19] recorded the custom for commoner Nāyars in 1579. Linschoten[20] reported in 1598 that Nāyars normally cremated their dead. Today, Nāyar death and anniversary rites are almost identical in form with those of Nambūdiris. During the period of death pollution they employ a lower matrilineal caste to instruct them in the rites. (In Cochin, Chīdigans fulfill this function; in South Malabar, Attikūrssis; and in North Malabar, Mārārs.) The same caste assists Nambūdiri Brahmans to prepare the ritual materials for their funerals, and has clearly transmitted the Brahmanical rites to the Nāyars. Similarly, at the end of the death pollution on the sixteenth day, during the *dīkṣā* period, and on anniversary days, Nāyars are instructed in their oblations by a priest of a degraded subcaste of Brahmans. (This subcaste is the Elayads in Cochin and South Malabar and the Nambidis in North Malabar.) A few peculiarly non-Brahmanical rites do, however, survive. In Kottayam, poorer Nāyars among commoners customarily bury their dead.[21] In both areas those who burn the dead bury the bones and ashes in a pot under a jack-fruit tree outside the ancestral house near the ancestor shrine. Some leave the bones there permanently and consider that the ghost remains near the bones and the ancestral house. Others dig up the bones after the period of mourning, dispose of half of them in a sacred river, and return the other half to the grave. The bones of *kāranavans* are sometimes [613] placed on an open platform under a jack-fruit tree, to which food offerings are made on days of propitiation. Other rites spring from the Nāyar view that the ghost requires appeasement rather than mere assistance to another world. Brahmans, for example, pour holy water into the mouth of a dying man to purify him for entry into the world of ancestors. Old-fashioned Nāyars offer rice gruel as a last act of appeasement.

Even the Sanskritic rites are in fact so adapted to Nāyar requirements that they 76
carry a quite different emphasis of meaning from that associated with them by Brah- 184
mans. First, the role-structure of the rites is, of course, completely adapted to the 564
descent system. A Nambūdiri deceased's chief mourner is his or her eldest son, or, 613
if there is no Nambūdiri son, the eldest brother's son. A Nāyar woman's chief mourner is her eldest son; that of a man, the man next junior to him in the property group. But all males of the *taravād* junior to the deceased make subsidiary *bali* offerings to him in the period of pollution. Brahman spouses observe mourning and death pollution for each other. Nāyar spouses traditionally observe no mourning or pollution for each other, for they belong to different *taravāds* and have no mutual legal obligations. If a Nāyar dies in a wife's house, his body must traditionally be returned to his *taravād* for cremation. Shortly before or after the death of her husband, a woman goes to view his body for the last time. She is then ceremonially conducted out of the house on the north side—the side opposite to that from which the god of death arrives. She is returned to her natal home, and after this she may never reenter her dead husband's house. In Cochin, where men traditionally had no obligations to their children, a child did not observe death pollution for his genitor. But in North Malabar, [591] where children have an intimate relationship with the father in avunculocal residence during childhood, a man's sons make offerings for him during death pollution, and the eldest son is second-in-command to the chief mourner at the cremation. The

Nambudiri Brahmans

776

184 eldest son also traditionally observed *dīkṣā* for his father along with the matrilineal heir.

● 564 Age-rank within the *taravād* finds expression in the rites. Among Nambūdiri
613 Brahmans, if an unmarried but initiated boy dies, his father may perform his funeral
[775] and anniversary rites. For the souls of father and son are dependent upon one another
for salvation. But among Nāyars, a man may not take part in funeral rites for one
junior to him in the *taravād*, for respect toward juniors is inappropriate. A Nāyar
who dies leaving no junior old enough to act as chief mourner is therefore buried
without ceremony and no rites are performed for his ghost.

769 Nāyars have adopted the Brahmanical belief that funeral and anniversary rites
assist the spirit in its passage to another world, and that immersion of the ashes in
184 sacred water affords it peace. Like the Brahmans, they acknowledge the theory of
564 rebirth, and hold that a spirit which is correctly propitiated after death is likely to
[782] be eventually reborn in a high estate. As in the case of the Brahmans, the theory of
karma provides the Nāyars with a moral rationale for their high position in the caste
system, and it is chiefly in this connection that I have heard it quoted. It is difficult to
discover how old are Sanskritic beliefs concerning the soul among Nāyars, and they
are not uniform at the present day. Most Nāyars use the word *pretam* to refer to the
ghost or the soul in all contexts. This is a Sanskrit word (*preta*) for a malevolent
ghost, but it is used by Nambūdiri Brahmans only for alien malevolent ghosts. A
few Nāyars stated that that aspect of the soul which is reborn is the *ātmā*. This Sanskrit
word is used by Brahmans for the soul in connection with rebirth and with union
with the universal soul, called *paramātmā*. The *ātmā*, these Nāyar informants say,
is neither malevolent nor beneficent. It cannot be understood by ordinary people
and is a subject for philosophers. The *pretam*, by contrast, is the punitive ghost of
an ancestor or of one who died violently. It can be only too easily understood even
by the ignorant and does not require deep study. This belief in two souls, or in a soul
and a ghost, may be modern, for it was given by only a few younger informants.

769 At all events, the Sanskritic rites of death are customarily adapted by Nāyars to
184 belief in a malevolent *pretam*, for at every step fear of the *pretam* is referred to. Whereas
564 Brahmans perform the rites ostensibly in order that the soul may be at peace, Nāyars
have traditionally performed them in active fear of the ghost's retaliation should its
782 comfort not be ensured. During the days of pollution, Nāyars offer rice balls before
a palmyra stem set up in the yard before the ancestral house. The *pretam* of the deceased
is believed to enter this stem, and it is believed that it will attack the *taravād* with
further death or with sickness if the offerings are not satisfactorily performed. During
the offerings each Nāyar propitiant in turn wears round his waist a piece of cloth
torn from the wrapper of the corpse in order to associate himself with the spirit.
But inside this cloth Nāyars also tuck a knife, blade uppermost, to ward off the spirit's
attack. After the offerings are made, both Brahmans and Nāyars clap their wet hands
[825] to summon crows to eat the rice balls. If the crows do not come, it is believed that the
spirit has not received the offering. This may then be repeated on the advice of the
astrologer. In Tanjore, Brahmans seemed to regret the miscarriage of the offering
only for the sake of the spirit. But Nāyars regard it as an extremely evil omen, and
[789] fear the ghost's retaliation in the form of a second death within the *taravād*. The
Brahmanical ceremonies themselves contain rites of segregation from the deceased
[764] which are susceptible to the interpretation that those who perform them wish to be
rid of him. Such, for example, is the rite of dashing a pot of water at the head end of

769

the pyre toward the close of the cremation, and the disposal of the bones and ashes 184
in a river far from the ancestral house. But among my Brahman informants in Tanjore 564
these rites were carried out without explanation, and hostility to the dead seemed to 782
find no conscious expression. Nāyars performed the same rites in full consciousness 764
of fear and hostility to the ghost. Even at the end of the *dīkṣā* period when the chief
mourner has deposited the ashes in a river, Nāyars believe that Bhairava and Kāla, [776]
messengers of the god of death, dog the mourner's footsteps back to his ancestral
house. He is out of danger from them only after performing final offerings in the house
which gather the ghost to its forebears and thus appease its wrath. Nāyars, like Brahmans, [152]
express grief at a death and engage in ceremonial weeping, although neither
caste weeps with the loud vehemence characteristic of the lower polluting castes. But
whereas Brahmans give full expression to grief and guilt, suppressing the hostile
aspect of their ambivalence, Nāyars perform the same rites in consciousness both of
grief and of hostile fear of the dead.

The traditional Nāyar rites and beliefs illustrate the common phenomenon of 76
elements of symbolic culture being diffused from one group to another and endowed 184
with a new emotional content and meaning in accordance with the needs of the
receiving group. The Nāyars presumably adopted Brahmanical death rites centuries 564
ago because of the prestige associated with certain distinctive customs of the highest
group in the caste society. The extensive contact with Brahmans afforded to them by
hypergamous marital unions gave them an unusual exposure to Sanskrit culture.
But through centuries of exposure to Brahmanical custom the Nāyars retained such [782]
characteristically "low caste" features as animal sacrifice to punitive deities, religious
possession, and propitiation of punitive lineage ghosts. I would argue that the Nāyars
and lower castes retained these customs because the emotional dispositions engendered
by their occupations and social relations—in particular, their ways of handling aggression
and relationships to authorities—are different from those of Brahmans. Presumably
also the Nāyars adapted the Sanskritic death rites to their own role structure
and belief system, because these grew out of and served to uphold norms of relationships
within the *taravād*.

THE CULTS OF ALIEN GHOSTS

In addition to lineage ghosts, Nāyars believe that the spirits of persons of any 769
caste who died prematurely from epidemic, accident, murder, or suicide can bring 184
misfortune to the living. Such ghosts, which I call alien ghosts, haunt the neighborhood
where they died and are particularly malevolent. The misfortunes they inflict include
many kinds of sickness; madness, female barrenness, cattle deaths, house fires, or
poltergeist activities. Like lineage ghosts, most alien ghosts are called *pretams.* In
Cochin, the Sanskrit word *piśāca* is sometimes used to distinguish them from lineage
ghosts. In Kottayam, there is an elaborate cult of certain particularly important
ghosts, which are called *teyyams* (a corruption of the Sanskrit word *deva* 'god').

In Cochin, one or more alien ghosts is sometimes attached to a Nāyar *taravād*, 769
whose members are obliged to arrange for its regular propitiation. The ghost may be 613
that of a person who is known to have died violently, within living memory, on the
taravād's land. Alternatively, when a misfortune occurs in a household, the astrologer 782
may newly discover that the ghost of some such person, long dead, is haunting the [778]
aravād's land. He may order a shrine to be built and propitiations to be made. Shrines

613 to alien ghosts are built in the garden of the *taravād* house. They are propitiated annually or in emergency, usually with a cock sacrifice and an offering of toddy. Such alien 778 ghosts are of a lineage other than that of the hosts and are usually of different caste. 782 If a member of the *taravād* dies violently, his successors take care of his ghost in the course of their ancestral propitiations and do not commonly build a special shrine for it in their garden. They may fear such a ghost more than they fear the ghosts of forebears who died naturally, but they will not speak of this to outsiders. Rather, they are likely to deny to others that violent deaths have taken place in their lineage in the past, particularly if the deceased was a suicide or was executed in punishment for a crime. Such a ghost may however be regarded as a source of misfortunes by a Nāyar household of another lineage or by a household of one of the lower castes, expecially it the deceased died on its land or was in some way connected with it. It is then enshrined as an alien ghost in the garden of this house.

769 Most commonly, an alien ghost housed in a Nāyar garden is that of a former serf 615 of the property group, of one of the "exterior" agricultural laboring castes of Pulayans, Parayans or Pānans. The legends of such ghosts are nowadays often forgotten, but 566 several Nāyars told me that they are likely to be the ghosts of serfs who died after a ● 564 quarrel with their masters or who were actually killed by them. The ghost is hostile 782 to the *taravād* as a group and demands regular sacrifices if misfortune is to be averted. It is more hostile and capricious than are lineage ghosts, although it can also afford a certain vague protection to the *taravād* if it is correctly propitiated. Propitiations are made annually by a person of the ghost's own caste, often a Parayan or Pulayan of a family now serving the Nāyar property group. The propitiant's fee and the materials for the offering are provided by the *taravād*.

An alien ghost tends to be angered by persons who walk near its shrine at times other than those of propitiations. Some ghosts are angered only if people approach them round midnight or midday. At night, however, ghosts are able to wander some distance away from their shrines, so that it is possible to approach and offend them without being conscious of trespassing. In case of sickness or misfortune, the astrologer [787] may diagnose that someone of the *taravād* has unwittingly offended the ghost and may order an emergency offering. After he has made the sacrifice, the low caste propitiant is likely to become possessed by the ghost and, while in a state of frenzy, [578] to declare its satisfaction or to order further offerings. He may also take the opportunity to voice any grievances harbored by the *taravād's* low caste servants against its *kāranavan*.

A ghost of this kind may occasionally harm someone from outside its hosts' *taravād* who walks on their land at night. It could also harm its low caste propitiant if he failed in the correct performance of the rites. Usually, however, its attacks are confined to its hosts.

The ghost of such a hostile servant is to be distinguished from that of a servant who died heroically and voluntarily in the service of his Nāyar masters. Many Nāyar *taravāds* have legends of faithful serfs who died defending their masters' house during war, saved the lives of women and children, rescued their patrons from accidental death, or committed suicide in grief when a Nāyar patron had been killed. After death the ghosts of these servants are housed along with the *taravād's* lineage ghosts and are honored in ancestral propitiations. Nāyars point out that their heroism even makes the difference of caste irrelevant, for food is offered to them before it is offered

782
769

to lineage ghosts who were junior to them in age. The living of the *taravād* themselves 613
make offerings to them and do them obeisance, whereas the ghosts of hostile serfs are 566
especially polluting and malevolent and can be propitiated only by persons of their 564
own caste.

Even so, the ghost of such a lower caste person who is honored for heroism by 769
the *taravād* of his masters may, if he died violently, be feared as an alien ghost by
other *taravāds*. In Kottayam in the eighteenth century, for example, there lived a 613
certain Nāyar village headman who had as his servant a man of the Tiyyar caste of 566
cultivators. During the invasions of Malabar by the Mysorean Muslim general, Tippu 564
Sultan, in the 1780's, the Nāyar's *taravād* was threatened with conquest and forcible
conversion to Islam. Having sent the women and children of his house into hiding, 175
the *kāranavan* prayed before his lineage's patron goddess until the Muslims were at 782
his gates. He then persuaded his Tiyyar servant to kill him, being unwilling to face
the disgrace of circumcision at the hands of the Muslims. Having slain his master,
the servant hid himself in an outhouse of the *taravād*. In the night he went forth
and attacked the Muslims single-handed, killing several of them to avenge his master,
before he was himself put to death. The ghost of this servant is now propitiated along
with the lineage ghosts of his master's *taravād*. It is also, however, propitiated as an
alien ghost by several other *taravāds* in the neighborhood.

Occasionally, malevolent alien ghosts are those of Nāyars who died violently, 769
often in expiation of some crime. They may have committed suicide after being 613
outcaste for contravention of religious laws, or in the case of a woman, may have been
killed by their matrilineal kinsmen after cohabiting with low caste men. A woman 684
called Kadangōtt Makkam, also of Kottayam, became a ghost in this way. According [762]
to legend, she was suspected by her sister-in-law of having sexual relations with an
Oilmonger. Her brothers banished her from the *taravād*. She was agonized at the
thought of leaving her children, and drowned them in the *taravād's* well. Her *kāranavan* [682]
and brothers were then obliged to stab her to death—the customary penalty for
fornication outside the caste, and perhaps, also, for murder within the *taravād*. She [842]
became an alien ghost particularly liable to prevent women from bearing children,
and is established in the gardens of several local *taravāds*.

Such alien ghosts, although Nāyar, are also propitiated by an officiant of the lower 769
caste. The propitiant is usually from some caste which specializes in exorcism and 564
counter-magic, such as Mannāns (washermen), Kanisans (astrologers, who in any 782
case diagnose the misfortune and advise the propitiation) or Pānans (umbrella-makers,
exorcists and agricultural workers). The mode of propitiation is the same as in the
case of a low caste ghost.

Finally, an alien ghost is occasionally that of a Brahman who died violently.
Brahman ghosts, or Brahmarākṣas, unlike all other ghosts, must be propitiated with
vegetarian offerings by a Brahman priest hired for the purpose. But Brahman priests,
unlike low caste officiants, never enter a state of voluntary possession by ghosts.
Religious possession is particularly a low caste institution. It is not practiced by [787]
Brahmans, and when found among Nāyars, it is practiced by young men, women,
and other persons who lack secular power. Brahmans do not need to become possessed
by their ghosts and deities, for they have the power to demand whatever offerings
and fees they require. Low caste propitiants need the authority of a supernatural
agent in order to make demands on their high caste masters.

769 No clear distinction is made between alien ghosts and minor malevolent deities,
776 or demons, which are also sometimes called *pretams* in Cochin. Some demons are found
[782] throughout Malabar. Chief of these is Kuttichāttan, a spirit capable of all kinds of
[564] poltergeist activities. Sometimes, on the advice of an astrologer, a *taravād* privately sets up a shrine to Kuttichāttan and arranges for his annual propitiation by a low caste
173 person in the same manner as an alien ghost. Often, indeed, local myths of particular
769 Kuttichāttans suggest that they have been derived from alien ghosts, whose legends
776 became fancifully embroidered with miraculous elements. The story of one Kutti-
782 chāttan, in this case enshrined in a Nambūdiri Brahman garden and propitiated by a washerman, will illustrate this process. The god was said to have been born from a sacrificial fire during ancestral ceremonies in a Brahman house. The Brahman house-owner brought him up, and when he was adult sent him to graze cattle as a serf. One day the Brahman's red-horned bull was missing, and the serf admitted that he had killed and eaten it. The Brahman tied him to the rafters of the cowshed and had him beaten to the point of death. Afterwards, the serf turned into a Kuttichāttan and disappeared, but hovered above the Nambūdiri household bringing misfortune until a shrine was set up for him. Educated Nāyar informants surmised that the spirit had originally been that of an executed serf, later glorified by his propitiants as Kutti-
782 chāttan. Similarly, Kadangōtt Makkam, whose story was related above, is spoken
769 of as a form of Bhagavadi in some *taravāds* where she is propitiated.

184 I have so far mentioned the kinds of alien ghosts which may be attached to individual *taravāds* in Cochin. In fact, however, cults of spirits and deities of the village are
776 grander and more numerous in Cochin than are those of the *taravād*. This parallels
564 the fact that the Cochin village was traditionally highly centralized as a unit of local
796 government. In this area, the temple of the village goddess Bhagavadi is managed
[794] either by a Nāyar village headman's lineage or collectively by a village community of
[613] commoner Nāyars. Only the Nāyars and castes above them might traditionally enter the temple, but all castes owed allegiance to the deity and took part in her annual festival. The lowest castes of former serfs, and some other polluting castes such as washermen, took part in the festival through the medium of one or more minor malevolent deities or particularly important local ghosts which occupied small
[753] shrines at a distance from the main temple. Such spirits were thought of as servants of the goddess, and at her will could "sow the seeds" of smallpox or other misfortunes in the village. To avert such misfortune not only must the Nāyars and other high castes propitiate the goddess herself, but the lower castes must also assemble, bringing imitation bullocks and horses—the vehicles of the deity's demon servants—and make
[787] offerings to these demons. Selected persons from these lower castes became possessed by the village ghosts or demons and, in masked dances, made oracular pronouncements both to their own and the higher castes. During the festival, and for several weeks before it, Nāyar households must also entertain these shamans privately in the courtyards of their houses and make gifts of grain to them which warded off the demons' wrath.

769 In Kottayam, the village was traditionally less centralized. Each Nāyar *taravād*
184 was an independent landowning body owing only tenuous allegiance to a chief. Cults
776 of deities and ghosts associated with particular *taravāds* are therefore more prominent
796 than are those of village temples, and it is in the former rather than the latter that
564 ritual cooperation between high and low castes is most prominent. Whereas a Cochin
613
782

769

ravād may enshrine only one or two alien ghosts particularly associated with it 184
aving the majority of local ghosts to be propitiated at the central village temple. 776
wealthy Nāyar *taravād* in Kottayam builds shrines in its garden for six or eight 796
lien ghosts and finances elaborate propitiations on their behalf. Such spirits are in 564
ottayam called *teyyams*. As in Cochin, the spirits are often the ghosts of Nāyar or
w caste persons who died violent deaths—for example, girls who died violently 613
efore marriage, women excommunicated or executed for sexual offences, persons 782
illed by lightning, servants executed by their masters, or warriors who died in battle.
sually, miraculous elements are interwoven into their legends. Sometimes, they
ecome merged with common minor deities such as Vettakkorumagan, Kandhā-
aranan, or some species of Bhagavadi. In a few cases, they have become associated
ith some episode from the puranic myths and their human origin is lost sight of.
s in the village temple rites of Cochin, these ghosts in Kottayam are propitiated,
n behalf of the Nāyar *taravād*, by selected persons from the lower castes. These are
hiefly Vannans (washermen) and Malayans (exorcists).[22] Annually, the propitiants
ssemble in the Nāyar courtyard and recite the myths of origin of their spirits. Later,
hey make and receive blood sacrifices to the spirits, and finally, while possessed by [787]
hem, perform spectacular masked dances and declare the spirits' satisfaction to an
ssembled company of many castes. These festivals take place throughout the whole
f several nights in the month of January to February and draw vast crowds from the
urrounding neighborhood.[23]

I have so far dealt with modes of propitiation of, and possession by, alien ghosts. 787
n addition, both in Cochin and Kottyam, Nāyars believe that certain persons can, 754
hrough appropriate rites and spells, gain private control over alien ghosts and minor 564
eities and engage in witchcraft or sorcery through their power. In what I call witch-
raft,[24] the individual uses the power of his patron spirit in order to take the form of a
ull, dog, jackal, or other animal. In this form he touches his foe in the night, causing [753]
im to fall ill with fever, to become insane, or even to die. Witches always belong to [761]
ne of the lowest castes of Parayans, Pulayans, Pānans or (in Kottayam) Malayans.
They usually attack persons of Nāyar or other high caste whom they themselves hate.
Occasionally, however, a normal person of any caste, even a Nāyar, may hire a witch
o attack a personal enemy.

A sorcerer performs rites and recites spells to an alien ghost or minor deity over which he has control and causes it to pass magically into the body of an enemy, thus bringing about fever, miscarriages in women, insanity or death. Sorcerers can also bring about the deaths of cattle. Nāyars attribute sorcery chiefly to lower caste persons. For whereas the Nāyars predominantly worship Bhagavadi and certain Sanskrit deities, the castes below Nāyars specialize in the propitiation of evil ghosts and minor deities, and it is solely with these lower supernatural beings that witchcraft and sorcery are associated. Washermen, astrologers and umbrellamakers, who specialize in exorcising ghosts from the bodies of patients, are particularly suspected by Nāyars of themselves engaging in sorcery. Nāyars do, however, occasionally suspect Nāyars of other lineages, particularly affines with whom they have quarreled, of practicing sorcery or of hiring low caste witches or sorcerers to attack them.

Witchcraft does not usually require the diagnosis of an astrologer. A Nāyar of nervous disposition simply suspects that a low caste man has bewitched him if he falls ill after encountering an animal in the night. Sorcery is usually diagnosed by an

787 astrologer, who, however, normally leaves his patient to guess which of his enemies
754 has injured him. Public accusations of witchcraft and sorcery are theoretically not
564 permitted, although Nāyars have been known to take the law into their own hands and
inflict beatings on Pānans and Parayans whom they believed to have attacked them
755 through witchcraft. Normally, sickness resulting from possession by a ghost or demon
as a result of witchcraft or sorcery is counteracted by exorcism. Local specialists of
754 the castes of washermen, astrologers or umbrellamakers are hired to attend at the
564 patient's house. There they make sacrifices to patron spirits whom they themselves
787 control. Later, they voluntarily become possessed by these spirits and perform frenzied
dances in hideous masks before the patient, calling upon the alien malevolent spirit
to leave him. The patient usually goes into a hysterical fit, after which the sickness
may subside. Exorcism by masked dancing of this kind is known as *kōlam tullal*.
Any form of rites or spells to control ghosts or minor deities, whether evil or beneficent,
is covered by the general term *mantravādam*.

ANALYSIS

769 The analysis of beliefs and practices centering about alien ghosts involves the
182 following questions: 1) Why are alien ghosts appropriate objects of fear? 2) How do
these fears fit into the general pattern of Nāyar handling of aggression? 3) What
psychic and social functions are fulfilled by the institutions surrounding alien ghosts?
The answers to these questions will relate the alien ghost patterns to the functioning
of the local community and its subgroups, and to the expressive needs of individuals.

769 *Alien ghosts as objects of fear*. Alien ghosts are individuals who suffered unusual or
152 premature death. People expect them to be especially malevolent. This expectation
is based on their presumed envy of the living, and in some instances on the fact that,
182 having found death through violence and hatred, they can be expected to continue
to be violent and hateful. Hence they are appropriate targets of fear.

Alien ghosts are the focus of more violent fears and hatreds than are the ghosts of
matrilineal forebears, for they can be even more capricious and wantonly punitive.
As we have seen, Nāyars do express a limited amount of aggression against lineage
[865] ghosts, and I have suggested that this is because their aggression training is not so
strict as to prevent them from acknowledging to themselves some degree of hostility
toward living matrilineal elders. Their projected aggression toward lineage ghosts,
however, is constrained—like their aggression toward living elders. These ghosts,
although punitive, are more protective than alien ghosts.

Alien ghosts are congenial objects for more violent aggression and fear, precisely
because they *are* alien. They are securely outside the individual's most significant set
[564] of personal relations—those of the lineage. Even Brahmans, whose aggression training
is so severe that they are unable to acknowledge hostility between themselves and
their own ancestral ghosts, express fear and hatred of alien ghosts.

I assume that the fear and hostility which is directed at alien ghosts really has its source elsewhere. My reason for this assumption is that, although the fact that they died unnaturally provides a plausible reason why alien ghosts should be thought of as generally hostile, there is in most cases no ostensible reason in the individual's own personal relationships to alien ghosts which would account for their being chosen as the targets of hatred and fear. Presumably, if we follow psychoanalytic theory, the ultimate sources of these fears lie in familial relationships. This would seem reasonable

627 wife, his matrilineal juniors were believed to be especially likely to hire sorcerers to
613 harm her. For they would fear that their *kāranavan* might secretly convey to his wife
152 gifts and cash which belonged to his *taravād*. Yet without their *kāranavan's* support
754 they would be unable to enter an open group conflict with the *taravād* of his wife. The belief that affines might practice sorcery, and the existence of ritual remedies
182 against such attacks, therefore provided for the expression of projected aggression against persons of other lineages within the caste. I do not know whether Nāyars did, in fact, hire sorcerers to harm their affines, or merely suspected this of others, but it seems very probable that they did. If so, sorcery also provided a covert mode for the expression of direct aggression outside the lineage too. It must be noticed that although, in the case cited, these hostilities arose as much in the conflict of interests between the *kāranavan* and his matrilineal kin as between the *kāranavan's* wife and her husband's *taravād*, their institutionalized expression was not allowed to disrupt the *taravād*. For the *kāranavan's* matrilineal kin could not practice, and could not be suspected of practicing, sorcery against the *kāranavan* himself. Instead, members of the *kāranavan's* lineage were believed to move (and probably did move) against his wife's lineage as a group, thus endangering the solidarity of the marriage but indirectly promoting unity within each lineage.

564 Turning to the relations between castes, it is obvious that as endogamous groups of different rank, occupation and wealth, castes were in many contexts outgroups to
578 each other whose interests were opposed. As landlords and noncultivating tenants,
152 the Brahmans and Nāyars wished to exploit the lower castes for their labor; conversely,
182 the lower castes wished to obtain as much compensation as possible from the higher
754 castes. In these circumstances there was great realistic potential for hostility between castes, quite apart from the fact that the internal unity of each caste probably required the displacement of considerable additional aggression toward outgroups in other castes. Organized physical aggression between castes was, however, not feasible. For castes were economically and politically interdependent and linked by hereditary, interhousehold service ties. The lower castes could not rise up against the higher castes who employed them and held political power, and the higher castes could not wantonly harrass the lower castes on whom they depended for services. Instead, it was in the relations between castes that the institutions of witchcraft and sorcery were most prominent. The general tendency was for the Nāyars to accuse the lower castes of these evils. This is understandable, for the Nāyars with their wealth and authority had particular reason to suspect the lower castes of envy and hidden hatred. This generalized projection of aggression toward the lower castes served to enhance the internal unity of the Nāyar caste. At the same time, the open expression of aggression against particular low caste persons was institutionally controlled. For the astrologer did not customarily name his client's enemy, and even if the Nāyar had his own suspicions, open accusations of witchcraft and sorcery were not permitted.

769 The lower castes were considered peculiarly appropriate propitiants for alien
564 ghosts, and only low caste people could voluntarily undergo possession by them.
787 This suggests that the Nāyar fear of direct attack from an alien ghost, like the fear of
152 witchcraft and sorcery, expressed in a disguised manner the Nāyars' projected aggression
182 against the lower castes. The association between lower castes and alien ghosts
[766] was, for Nāyars, indeed appropriate, for both were ritually polluting. Among Nāyars, the corpses of persons who die violently or from epidemic are unusually polluting and

769

their ghosts unusually dangerous. Instead of being burned by their matrilineal kin, 564
the corpses of these persons are buried hastily by men of the washermen's caste—a 787
caste particularly associated with demon propitiation and voluntary ghost possession. 152
The spirits of these victims become alien ghosts. In their anger they may possess and 182
cause injury to persons of any caste in their community. But only the lower castes
can induce shamanistic possession by them, and it is chiefly (some say only) the lower [766]
castes who can control them to work good or ill. Appropriately, Nāyars believe that
low caste witches perform additional rites connected with highly polluting objects
and places in order to enhance their evil power. Witches, for example, are believed to [754]
procure a magical substance by abstracting the foetus from the body of a pregnant
woman and boiling it in a cremation ground, to the accompaniment of spells to a
favorite ghost or patron demon.

There is, however, a qualitative difference between the Nāyar fear of direct 769
attack from an alien ghost and the fear of witchcraft or sorcery. An element of morality
enters into the former fear, even though alien ghosts are more wanton and capricious 613
than lineage ghosts. Although they are malevolent and hateful, alien ghosts must, 182
like lineage ghosts, be respected and propitiated, and there is a feeling that they have 564
the right to be as they are. When they are associated with regular cults of the *taravād*
and the village, moreover, alien ghosts can also afford some vague measure of protection
from misfortune to those Nāyars who conscientiously arrange for their propitiation.
It follows, therefore, that the alien ghost attached to a *taravād* or a village temple
acts in some measure as a kind of conscience for the Nāyar in his relations with low
caste people. For a Nāyar *taravād* which arranges grand festivals for its alien ghosts,
lavishing gifts on the low caste officiants who propitiate them and represent them as
oracles, is also likely to be a *taravād* which has good relations with its lower caste
servants in all contexts of living. In the case of the Nāyar relation to alien ghosts of [154]
his *taravād* and his village, as in the case of his relation to lineage ghosts, the concept of
reprojection of the superego may therefore be appropriate, as well as that of the
simple projection of aggressive id impulses. For while there seems no doubt that the
Nāyar projects on to alien ghosts some of the aggression which he has toward the lower
castes, just as he projects onto lineage ghosts some of the aggression he feels toward
matrilineal elders, these ghosts act also as stern monitors of his conduct in relationships,
respectively, with the lower castes and with matrilineal kin.

The situation is somewhat different with regard to beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery. 754
It is true that a Nāyar who has recently wronged an untouchable or an affine may be 769
one most likely to suspect untouchables or affines of attacks by sorcery. But he does
not—at least openly—phrase the attack in terms of justifiable retaliation for his own 564
wrongdoing. Instead, he speaks of some anonymous affine or low caste person who,
out of his own envy and wickedness, has used his evil power over a patron ghost in
order to harm an innocent person. Nor does the Nāyar respond to the attacks of witches [782]
and sorcerers by humble propitiation of the possessing demon. Instead he engages a [755]
low caste practitioner of his own to exorcise the demon with the help of a superior
ghostly power. Thus, while both the belief in sorcery and the public cults of alien
ghosts probably reveal, indirectly, the projection of Nāyar aggression against out-groups, they operate in different social contexts. Witchcraft and sorcery are regarded,
by Nāyars who are the recipients of these attacks, as the evil work of envious persons
against those more successful than themselves. They are seen as covert substitutes for

754 forms of direct aggression which would be condemned by law. I am uncertain whether
769 low caste people actually practice sorcery, but it seems very probable that they do.
564 If they do, it is also very probable that they regard their actions as forms of retaliation which are morally justifiable, although outside the framework of the law. By contrast, alien ghosts institutionally attached to the *taravād* and the village have the support of all right-minded persons and are more comparable to institutionalized secular authorities. For they are concerned with the overall maintenance of interdependent and harmonious relations between castes of the community, and their cults are a public, collective acknowledgement of the need for these relationships.

564 A complete analysis of alien ghost cults would, of course, require full discussion
769 of their role in the lives of the lower castes themselves. I lack space here for such a discussion but will make one or two relevant points. In each of these lower castes there were cults of familial ghosts. These, though less elaborate than the Nāyar cult of lineage ghosts, fulfilled similar intrafamilial functions. Some lower caste households
[778] also erected one or more unhewn stones in their gardens which were believed to enshrine male or female alien ghosts or minor deities. These spirits seem to have fulfilled, for the household itself, similar functions to those of the *dharma devī* of a Nāyar *taravād*. They were propitiated by the low caste householder. Nāyars believed that a low caste man could also control such a household spirit, or some personal spirit over which he had gained individual sway, to bring harm on an enemy through sorcery. Lower caste persons certainly believed that some members of their castes possessed these powers, and it seems probable that some persons did try to employ them. Household or personal spirits could also be used by powerful owners to exorcise other harmful spirits from the bodies of high or low caste people suffering from attacks by sorcery.

564 The Nāyar's relationship to these lower castes was therefore one of secular authority
152 combined with some ability to oppress them in the economic and political spheres.
754 In addition, the Nāyar projected his aggression against them in the belief that they might harm him through witchcraft or sorcery. The lower caste man's relationship to the Nāyar was one of submission. He could not express direct aggression toward the Nāyar. He probably did, however, express aggression toward a Nāyar enemy covertly through sorcery. It is possible that a few low caste persons in addition believed themselves capable, through witchcraft, of assuming the form of an animal and bringing harm to an enemy of higher caste. It must also be mentioned that low caste persons believed others of their caste to be capable of sorcery against themselves. Witchcraft,
769 however, seems to have been confined to relationships between low and high castes.

The lower castes of the village also owed allegiance to the Nāyar goddess Bhagavadi.
564 who was enshrined in Cochin in the village temple, and in Kottayam in small temples
782 attached to particular *taravāds*. The lower castes could, however, approach Bhagavad,
613 only through the propitiation of alien ghosts attached to the *taravād* or the temple. In the context of these propitiations, the lower caste officiant's relationship to his
776 Nāyar hosts was a complex combination of aggression, authority, cooperation, and
152 submission. In the *teyyam* festival of a Nāyar *taravād* in Kottayam, for example, lower caste officiants must first humbly gain permission from the living Nāyar *kāranavan*, the Nāyar lineage ghosts and the *taravād* goddess before starting their own propitiations. In the offerings to the *teyyams* which follow, the officiant's attitude to these minor deities is ostensibly one of humility, although the actual performance of the blood sacrifices permits considerable expenditure of aggression. Later, when the officiant

152

dons his mask and becomes possessed by his *teyyam*, he may adopt an authoritative 764
or aggressive attitude to his Nāyar hosts, demanding gifts or threatening them with 564
misfortune before conferring his blessing. He may not, of course, physically attack 782
the Nāyars. Indeed, he is, while possessed, likely to solicit admiration by inflicting 613
physical suffering on himself, usually by burning himself with torches or rolling in
the red hot ashes of a fire. After the oracular pronouncements, having doffed his mask, [787]
the officiant again becomes the servant of the *taravād* and humbly accepts his fee. [085]
For the low caste officiant, therefore, these festivals permit a limited, stylized expression
of aggression and a temporary assumption of authority toward their high caste
masters. At the same time, the festivals underline both the need for interdependence
between the castes, and ultimately, the lower castes' permanent, secular role as submissive
servants.

Functions of the cults of alien ghosts. My discussion of alien ghost institutions in the 769
general context of Nāyar handling of aggression has necessarily pointed to some of 182
their social and psychic functions. These may, it seems, be summarized as follows.
First, the cults permitted, in a harmless manner, the handling of aggression which 152
arose in relations between castes. Second, whether or not witchcraft or sorcery were [754]
actually practiced, the belief that those whom he wrongfully harassed could arm
themselves with these ritual weapons must have acted as a deterrent to the Nāyar [626]
authority who was tempted to oppress low caste subordinates, or to favor his affines
at the expense of his matrilineal juniors. Through witchcraft and sorcery, alien ghosts,
therefore, might help to prevent injustices which could not readily be brought before
a secular authority.

Third, these institutions brought together in ritual cooperation the very categories 769
of persons whose mutual ambivalence provided the ultimate motive force for the 564
institutions themselves. In the case of witchcraft and sorcery, there existed a complicated 182
interplay of hostilities and alliances which, over time, balanced each other. All
Nāyars feared the harmful supernatural power of the lower castes, and this gave unity
to their caste. In a particular instance, however, a Nāyar who believed himself attacked
by an individual low caste practitioner, or by another Nāyar with the help of such a
practitioner, could obtain relief only by engaging the ritual assistance of some other
officiant from one of the suspected castes. In the case of the cults of alien ghosts institutionally [152]
attached to his *taravād* and his village temple, it seems that the Nāyar's [154]
generalized fear of and hostility to outgroups was turned outside the area of human
relations and focussed upon supernatural agents feared by all. But again, only willing
and friendly ritual cooperation with lower caste officiants could ward off supernatural
attacks from the whole community, including the Nāyars.

It seems probable to me that one of the most important functions of all religious 796
ritual, if not the important, is this resolution of conflict within individuals and within 769
groups. The manner in which this is achieved varies greatly. The rituals of rebellion[25] 152
and the initiation rites[26] analyzed by Gluckman, for example, on the surface bear little 182
resemblance to Nāyar cults of the dead. But as Gluckman has shown, their broad
social functions are the same. Institutionalized religious ritual, like the private rites of
obsessional neurotics, permits to the individual a disguised expression of his aggression,
while at the same time reassuring him that his control over the direct physical expression
of aggression is unimpaired. But institutionalized ritual does far more than this.
It has not only temporary therapeutic value for the individual, but is also interwoven

178 was still undivided commented to me on this change. "In my *taravād*," he said, "I
613 dare not speak before the *kāranavan* without standing and placing my hand before
604 my mouth. But in K. *taravād*, after their partition, I have seen the nephews sitting
to play cards with their uncle and passing the cigarette from their mouth to his. When I saw this I knew that relationship means property, and without property there is no relationship."

178 Moreover, the change to elementary family households does not merely entail
594 a shift of the same disciplinary functions from the mother's brother to the father.
152 Nāyar fathers have a tradition of indulgent tenderness toward their children and are
loth to discipline them. Even when they are forced to do so, the techniques of dis-
593 cipline differ from those in a traditional *taravād* house. In the intimate atmosphere
of the small elementary family household, traditional etiquette is abandoned. Children
[154] learn to obey both parents from love more than from fear. There appears to be a
much deeper repression of aggression than in the traditional setting, and correspondingly,
[769] many young Nāyars cannot entertain the notion that their parents' ghosts
could act punitively toward them. It seems probable that such changes in the modes of handling aggression—affected also by the collapse of the military tradition and the modern legal ban on all forms of physical aggression—may also lie behind the repugnance of modern Nāyars for such other traditional religious forms as blood sacrifice and spirit possession.

178 Also important in the abandonment of ghost cults is, however, an increased tend-
ency toward the adoption of Sanskrit rites. This tendency, which has marked all
● 564 the non-Brahman castes during the past hundred years or so, I would associate with
177 increasing mobility within the caste system and, most recently, with its gradual
collapse. For the Nāyars, as for the lower castes, the Brahmans are no longer a group with whom they have fixed status relationships. Instead, the Brahmans are now a reference group whom the Nāyars emulate and with whom they compete in the struggle for high rank and respectability. Some Nāyars who still hold their traditional beliefs in ancestral spirits and deities deliberately "purge" their rites of non-Sanskritic elements in order to gain respectability. Others have changed both rites and beliefs toward a modified form of the Brahmanical religion, even while they are busy repudiating the religious authority of the Brahman. Yet others, whose number is probably
[829] increasing, repudiate both Brahmanical and non-Sanskritic religions in their orthodox
forms. Instead, they work out for themselves a more or less agnostic world view with humanitarian ideals, in which ceremonies, if they figure at all, figure only as acts of piety toward respected persons.

178 The cults of alien ghosts are also changing their form and gradually dying out.
769 This change accompanies the gradual collapse of the caste system as a system of ranked
occupational groups linked by hereditary service ties. The collapse of the caste system
564 itself results from the growth of the capitalist market economy and the democratization of political institutions. Some Nāyars retain their beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery, but the categories of persons whom they suspect are no longer solely caste
[755] determined. They are as likely to include fellow factory workers or competitors in
government service, irrespective of caste. Professional exorcists of appropriate caste are
[782] often no longer available, for many have left their traditional work. So also have many of
the low caste families who formerly propitiated ghosts and minor deities associated with village temples or with Nāyar *taravāds*. Since the passing of the Temple Entry

178

Act of 1947, moreover, low caste persons in general wish to enter the main court of 769 the temple along with the higher castes and to propitiate the great deity. Alternatively, they build modern temples of their own dedicated to Sanskrit gods. They begin to 564 shun the outer courtyards of temples populated by ghosts and devils and to leave these unpropitiated. Some Nāyars still believe that the lower castes have supernatural powers as sorcerers and lycanthropic witches, but believe that as the lower castes acquire education and "civilization" they voluntarily give up these powers. Others now deny that ghosts, witches, or sorcerers ever possessed powers at all.

All of these changes in belief and ritual are probably linked not only specifically 178 to the collapse of *taravād* and caste as small birth-status groups, but more generally 571 to the widening range of Nāyar social relations and to the relaxing of their former tight interdependencies in face-to-face relationships. As they move into a heterogeneous, mobile, urban setting composed partly of impersonal relationships with strangers, the Nāyars cease to regard the natural order as in all respects a moral order and cease to seek personal motives as the ultimate causes of misfortunes. The growth 178 of scientific knowledge in schools and the spread of medical facilities also obviously influence beliefs about illness. This does not, of course, mean that the Nāyars and lower [154] castes no longer require institutionalized modes of handling their aggressive impulses and their uncertainty in face of cosmic mysteries. In a few areas of living, new religious institutions have developed, which are outside the subject of this paper. In general, however, I think it is true to say that the scope of ritual beliefs and activities is shrinking[27] for Malabaris as a whole, and that as technology develops and new social arrangements become feasible, they concentrate more on the "how" of misfortunes, leaving the "why" to chance. Correspondingly, of course, conflict is increasingly handled [627] through modern secular institutions (the law-court, the trades' union, the political party, the democratic election, etc.), which produce continuing social structural changes rather than serving to maintain harmony within traditional birth-status groups.

NOTES

[1] For a brief analysis of social change among the Nāyars, see E. K. Gough, "Changing Kinship 113 Usages in the Setting of Political and Economic Change Among the Nāyars of Malabar," *Journal Royal Anth. Institute*, LXXXII (1952), 71-88.

[2] George P. Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York, 1949), p. 2.

[3] The Madras *Marumakkattayam* Act of 1933, and the Cochin Nāyar Act of 1937.

[4] Before the date of this Act, all division of ancestral property in a Nāyar *taravād* had been stirpital.

[5] For accounts of Nāyar propitiations of lineage ghosts, see E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), V, 362-3; F. Fawcett, *The Nāyars of Malabar*, Bull. Madras Govt. Museum (Madras, 1901), III, No. 3, 245-253; K. M. Panikkar, "Religion and Magic Among the Nayars," *Man*, XVIII, No. 7 (1918); V. K. Raman Menon, "Ancestor Worship Among the Nayars," *Man*, XX, No. 3 (1920); R. K. Pisharodi, *Ancestor Worship in Kerala* (1923).

[6] Menon, 1920.

[7] M. J. Levy, Jr., *The Family Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, 1949), pp. 168-9.

[8] F. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans., Jas. Strachey (New York, 1950), pp. 51-63.

[9] M. Mead, *Male and Female* (New York, 1949), pp. 297-304.

[10] M. E. Opler, "An Interpretation of Ambivalence in Two American Indian Tribes," *Journal of Social Psych.*, VII (1936), 82-115.

[11] A. Kardiner and Associates, *The Psychological Frontiers of Society* (New York, 1945), pp. 112, 118ff, 167; M. Fortes, *The Web of Kinship Among the Tallensi* (Oxford, 1949), p. 234ff;

is surrounded by a series of concentric circles as it were, on 778
the outside is a wide road where fairs are held and much
commerce goes on on festive days. The low castes cannot [564]
go beyond this outer fringe. Lodged within, is the garden 778
where the snakes are to be seen in their natural habitat. In this 825
area is a sacred tank, the water of which is rather dirty due to falling vegetation, but which is reputed to be medicinal in property. Here too is a very large vessel into which milk is poured by the priest so that the snakes might be well fed. Within this belt of vegetation and bushes is the shrine itself. There is a verandah with a central hall called *mandapa* with an open space in front, and in the centre is the platform where the snake deities are enshrined. There are two images here, one of Nag Raj with five heads and the other of a serpent with only one head. This is the inner sanctuary where only the priest enters. In Manarsalil temple a virgin priestess conducts the most sacred rites and is considered to be the guardian of the serpents.

A similar position pertains among the Meitheis [771]
of Manipur, where a priestess looks after the serpent god called Pak-hangba.[8] Near the verandah is a sacred well from [782]
which water is drawn as offering to the deities and is afterwards distributed to the devotees as holy water. It is believed that only pious people can see the snakes in the forest and the wicked cannot. The devotee considers himself blessed if he is able to catch a glimpse of the snake while on his way to the temple.

The common private snake shrine in Travancore lies within 825
the compound of the house, often near the boundary, and away 778
from the main building, in order to best preserve its sanctity 351
and to avoid accidental pollution by inadvertent trespass by 771
some members of the family. The abode of the snake god is called *sarpa kavu*, and this is usually a raised patch of land surrounded by bushes and trees. In the foliage there must be a [224]
plant yielding milky sap and in the absence of such a plant, one is planted near the shrine. The trees near the shrine are never cut and the area in the vicinity of the *sarpa kavu* is kept very clean. 825
Often granite images of many-headed snakes with spreading 778
771

showered on it, and it is often garlanded. Incantations and 796 782
mantras are recited by the priest during the ceremony.

Bell-metal oil lamps are lit in front of the images and their [354]
number is usually 3, 5 or 7. In each lamp there are 5 to 7 [801]
wicks pointing in different directions. Only coco-nut oil or *ghee* is used in these ceremonial lamps. In front of these lamps are placed three banana leaves with the cut end of the leaf facing the image and the tip pointing away from it, facing north or east. On one of the leaves some uncooked rice is placed and a husked coco-nut is kept over it, while in the other leaf unhusked paddy is heaped with a coco-nut placed on it. The eyes of the coco-nut are away from the snake idol and are towards the tip of the banana leaf. On the third leaf are placed a few small bananas of a special variety called *kadali*, because *kadali* is referred to in the Vedas.

The boiled rice offering is then placed near the shrine and some money is offered to the idol by dropping it in the oil of the lamp. These preparations are offered to the snake god who is supposed to partake of them. Thereafter the *prasad* or the offering is distributed among the members of the family,
and the priest gets half of it. The *prasad* must not be eaten [225]
by a crow or dog as this is a bad omen. After the worship, the [987]
contents of the leaves are given to the priest who therefore takes great pains to see that this particular ceremony is well conducted.

Once a month or once every three months, low caste Hindus 782 796
called Pulluvans visit the houses which have snake shrines. 564
Usually they come on Tuesdays or Fridays, and they sing songs [533]
in praise of the snake gods. This is done in a rather crude [534]
manner to the accompaniment of crude single-stringed instruments called *veena kunju*. For this invocation, an oil lamp is lit before the shrine, and the above-mentioned three banana leaves and their respective contents are placed before the image of the serpent. Usually a woman accompanies the male singer and joins in the chorus, playing the while upon a crude drum. After the praise has been adequately rendered, the ceremony is brought to a close and the musician gets his share of money and materials. This ceremony is meant to propitiate and

796 please the serpent god and to flatter him so that he may bear
[564] the welfare of the host in mind, and guard the family against
disease, misfortune and harm accruing from human or supernatural agencies.

There are three important ceremonies in connection with serpent worship called *sarpa yaga*, *sarpa tulal* and *sarpa preeti*. They are conducted either at home or in the temple, usually on Sundays, since it is held that the serpents are most powerful and lenient on that day and are in a benign mood for granting favours.

[791] *Sarpa preeti* is conducted in the house whenever misfor-
tune occurs. The astrologer is consulted who decrees that a curse is upon the house and the serpents are angry. Thereupon elaborate worship is conducted with much ritual, and propitiation of the angered deities is effected and normalcy returns.

796 *Sarpa tulal* is a form of divine cure of the afflicted. The
unfortunate victims of leprosy, mental or other diseases
755 gather to worship the serpent gods praying for a cure. The priest conducts the worship and the afflicted go into a trance-like state and dance in religious fervour. Thereafter the priest throws consecrated turmeric powder on their heads and faces. The devotee feels blessed and cures are believed to occur.

796 *Sarpa yaga* is an annual festival in which many families jointly contribute to hold the ceremony. It is held usually for the collective prosperity of the village and lasts for two or three days. The afflicted and diseased persons dance in a trance for a long time and are given coco-nut water by the priest. At the end of the *puja* the priest sprinkles turmeric powder over the heads of the devotees and pours out holy water thrice in the palm of their hands.

825 One of the special attributes of snakes is their power
753 over disease. The snake deities are specifically impor-
776 tuned for the prevention of skin diseases, stomach disorders,
mental disturbances and for sterility. Leucoderma and
leprosy are specially regarded as due to the curse of snakes
who might have been angered by some unwitting disres-
pect shown towards them, or by accidental misdemeanour
600 on the part of the inadvertant devotee. Of particular impor-

Nayar

Female Initiation Rites on the Malabar Coast

*Curl Bequest Prize Essay, 1953**

E. KATHLEEN GOUGH

INTRODUCTION 588

UNTIL TWENTY YEARS AGO, the *tālikeṭṭukalyāṇam* (*tāli*-tying marriage) was performed by almost 564
all the castes of Malabar below Brahmans and above the lowest 'exterior' castes.[1] I confine 121
this discussion to four groups with different kinship systems: the matrilineal, uxorilocal
Nayars of South Malabar District and Cochin; the matrilineal, virilocal Nayars of North 611
Malabar District; the matrilineal, virilocal Tiyyars of North Malabar District; and the 591
double unilineal, patrilocal Tiyyars of South Malabar and Cochin.[2]

This girls' initiation ceremony was apparently first described in 1510 by Duarte Barbosa, 121
a Portuguese traveller. Since that date, there have been descriptions of the ceremony by other
Portuguese, Dutch, and East India Company writers, and in the past sixty years much 588
controversy between Indian and British anthropologists about its origin and meaning. Yet
no one, as far as I know, has recognized its significance in terms of the total kinship systems of [175]
the castes who performed it.[3] My first task has therefore been to describe the *tāli*-rite in each
caste and to discuss its social function in the kinship system; I do so in Parts I to IV of the essay.
In these, I have used the reports of previous writers which, since the rite died out about [127]
twenty years ago, are in many cases better than those I collected from informants. At the
same time, for a full interpretation of the rite, I found it necessary to incorporate some of my
own general field data on Nayar and Tiyyar kinship, collected in 1947-9. My field work was [114]
carried out in a South Malabar village (Walluvanāḍ subdivision) for six months, in a Cochin
village for eight months, and in a North Malabar village (Kottayam subdivision) for eight
months.[4]

Having analyzed, as far as I was able, the social function of the ceremony, I found that, as perhaps with all rites, many of its features were not explicable in terms of social function and of conscious motivations. While it was possible to show, in a general way, how in each case the ceremony was in harmony with the pattern of kinship relations in these groups, it was not possible to explain sociologically why certain persons should take part in the rites, rather than other persons, why certain material objects should be used, and indeed, why it should be necessary to perform this ceremony at all. It seemed to me that the answer to these problems lay in unconscious motivations common to the members of these castes, and could

---

*[Two Curl Bequest Prizes were awarded for the year 1953, one to the writer of the present essay and the other to Mr H. N. C. Stevenson, O.B.E., for his essay 'Status Evaluation in the Hindu Caste System', which appeared in the last volume of the JOURNAL. – ED.]

[1] For a brief analysis of modern changes in Nayar kinship see Gough (1952). For a fuller analysis of modern changes in the Tiyyar systems see Aiyappan (1944).

[2] The Tiyyars are called Iravas or Chovans in some parts of South Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore. For convenience, I use 'Tiyyars' throughout. [101]

[3] Dr Aiyappan (1942; 1944, pp. 159-62) has made the most comprehensive study of Malabar *tāli*-rites. He concludes that in most of the castes the *tāli*-rite is 'nothing more than an initiatory rite, preliminary to attaining marriageable status'. While I agree with him, I think that this conclusion begs the question and does not explain the function or motivations of the rite. [114]

[4] My field work was made possible by the grant of a William Wyse Studentship from Trinity College, Cambridge, and of an Anthony Wilkin Studentship from the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge. [122]

121 be elucidated only in terms of a psycho-analytic hypothesis. Part V of the essay is therefore
[588] an attempt to try out a psycho-analytic approach to Hindu ritual, and to show, with reference
to one ceremony, that this approach permits a deeper analysis than is possible if we limit ourselves to a discussion of social function.

The use by anthropologists of psycho-analytic findings to interpret primitive myth and ritual is familiar from modern American writings; it has scarcely been accepted by British anthropologists. I admit that, for anthropologists, psycho-analytic theories must in the long run depend for their authority on analyses of a significant number of individuals in the society whose symbolism it is hoped to interpret. Such data are not, however, at present forthcoming, and in many Indian groups it is doubtful if they will be forthcoming before the myths and rites have died out. In the meantime, as I hope to show, the results of psycho-analytic work in the West can give us insights into the probable unconscious motives behind primitive religious practices, and allow us to formulate new if tentative hypotheses on the connexions between the kinship structure of a group and its religious symbolism.

[127] This essay therefore, while confined to the analysis of one ceremony, fulfils the terms of the Curl Bequest Competition, since it incorporates in a single theory field data recently collected on four Malabar kinship systems; uses the material of other anthropologists (see Aiyappan 1942, 1944; Dube 1953) who have worked on Indian initiation rites in the past ten years, to advance a sociological interpretation of these rites; and tests, with reference to these rites, certain hypotheses of the British school of psycho-analysts put forward in recent years.[1]

635 PART I. THE NAYAR *TĀLI*-RITE IN SOUTH MALABAR AND COCHIN

175 THIS AREA IS IN THE CENTRE OF THE MALABAR COAST, south of the Kora River and north
of the Travancore-Cochin boundary. Before 1792, it comprised the mutually hostile kingdoms
564 of the Zamorin of Calicut, the Raja of Walluvanād, and the Maharaja of Cochin. The area
184 was temporarily conquered by the Zamorins in the late 15th century and Cochin and Walluvanād
were made feudatory kingdoms. Probably for this reason, the Nayar sub-castes of
[131] Walluvanād and Cochin correspond closely to those of Calicut, since they owed their existence
to a political system common to these three kingdoms. By contrast, the kingdoms to the
north and south, where the Zamorins failed to penetrate, had different political systems and
correspondingly different hierarchies of Nayar sub-castes. Today, the Nayars of South Malabar
and Cochin still show greater cultural similarity, feel greater unity, and intermarry more
freely than they do with Nayars to the north or to the south.

175 At the head of each of the central kingdoms was a royal matrilineage. Being at enmity,
613 the royal lineages disputed for rank, would not intermarry, and, though exogamous, formed
each a separate caste. Each however acknowledged itself inferior to the Nambūdiri Brahmans
564 (landlords and priests) whose separate caste-organization extended throughout the Malabar
635 Coast, and who were above and outside the laws of the separate kingdoms.

Below the royal lineages came the Sāmantans, chiefs (*nāduvaris*) of districts (*nāds*). These
175 owed allegiance to the Raja and had administrative control over the next sub-caste, of Kiriyattil
Nayars (called Vellayma Nayars in Cochin), the headmen (*desavaris*) of villages (*desams*).
564 Below the Kiriyattils came three parallel sub-castes: Sūdra Nayars, Charna Nayars (respectively
called Illath Sūdras and Swaroopattil Sūdras in Cochin), and Pallichans. Sūdra Nayars
631 were hereditary tenants and retainers in villages where the land was owned by a patrilineal
family of Nambūdiri Brahmans. Charna Nayars were retainers in villages owned by *nāduvari*
613 or *desavari* lineages. Pallichans owed similar allegiance in villages owned by a branch of the

---

[1] For the psycho-analytic interpretation of this essay I am chiefly indebted to Freud (1913, 1918, 1919), Ernest Jones (1931, 1951), Melanie Klein (1932), and Roheim (1950).

royal lineage. The retainer sub-castes disputed for rank and, in their separate villages, held 175
the same rights of administration over the lower castes. In all these sub-castes, including 564
the royal lineage, men were trained from the age of seven as soldiers in village gymnasia
headed by military leaders (Asâns), and formed a permanent, mobile militia of the king- 613
dom. Below the retainer sub-castes in rank came the small, non-military Nayar servant sub- 631
castes of oil-mongers, funeral-priests, washermen, and barbers.[1] Quite apart from these
Brahman and Nayar sub-castes, in a separate area of the village lived the lower patrilineal [201]
castes of tenants and menials and the lowest, 'exterior' castes of serfs. [566]

The Nayar Kinship System. The Nayar lineage (*taravâd*) is exogamous and matrilineal kin-
ship terms are extended throughout its range. Its members are united by the observance of 613
fifteen days' ritual pollution at a birth or death, and traditionally by worship of the spirits [601]
of dead heads of the lineage, and of a group of totemic snakes. The lineage is divided into
small segments, which I call property-groups, each three to five generations deep. Each group [583]
is headed by its eldest man (*kâranavan*) who is the legal guardian of its members and controls [illegible]
their property.

The property-group was also until recently the dwelling-group. Residence was, and is [569]
still in some houses, uxorilocal: a husband visits his wife after supper and leaves before break- [592]
fast. Traditionally, a woman might have any number of lovers of appropriate sub-caste, [591]
and a man any number of mistresses. This custom of combined polyandrous and polygynous
unions, besides being consistent with a strong matrilineal lineage system, was almost certainly [595]
associated with the occupation of Nayar men as soldiers, since it began to die out shortly after
the armies were disbanded, about 1810, and a hundred years before the lineage showed signs [198]
of disintegration.

The rules of mating were as follows. Sex relations were prohibited within the lineage, 613
and with more than one man or one woman of the same lineage. The Nayar servant sub- 582
castes of oil-mongers, funeral-priests, washermen, and barbers, were endogamous, as were 564
all the lower patrilineal castes and the serf-castes. Within the range of military and ruling sub-castes (except for the royal lineages which admitted no peers), all unions were permissible outside the lineage and the range of prohibited affines, and within the sub-caste. Furthermore, these sub-castes were knit together by 'hypergamous' unions between women of lower and men of higher sub-caste. Members of the three retainer sub-castes, which disputed for rank, had only temporary and sporadic sex-relations across sub-caste boundaries. These took place during war when soldiers were permitted to contravene the normal rules against dining with or touching members of other retainer sub-castes and might enter each others' houses in order to eat and sleep. More permanent relationships were encouraged between women of the retainer sub-castes and Kiriyattil, Sâmantan, royal, or Nambûdiri men; between Kiriyattil women and Sâmantan, royal, or Nambûdiri men; between Sâmantan women and royal or Nambûdiri men; and between royal women and Nambûdiri men. The royal lineages, acknowledging no others as peers, were obliged to marry all their women upwards and all their men downwards. The Walluvanâd and Cochin princesses married Nambûdiri men, the princes Sâmantan, Kiriyattil, or retainer-women. The Zamorins at first married only some of their women to Nambûdiris, and the rest to men of the more ancient royal lineages of Beypore, Bettem, and Kodungalur, all of whom had been conquered by the Zamorins and made honoured vassals in their kingdom. At some time in the 18th century, the Zamorin's lineage gave up this practice and began to marry its women only to Nambûdiris, while continuing to marry its men to Sâmantan, Kiriyattil, and retainer-Nayar women.

---

[1] Respectively called Vettukads, Attikurssis (Chidigans in Cochin), Veluthedans, and Vilakkatalavans. The small temple-servant castes who rank between Nambûdiris and Nayars and were also concerned in hypergamous marriages are for lack of space excluded from this discussion.

Nayar

564 **Among Nambūdiris only the eldest son of the patrilineal family might take one or more**
582 **wives from his caste and beget children for his family. Younger sons might form liaisons**
only with Nayar women, their children being Nayar by matrilineal descent. Nambūdiri
421 **younger sons, like unmarried Nambūdiri women (of whom there were many), had rights**
to maintenance from the ancestral estate but might not divide the property. These customs
ensured the stability of the Nambūdiri estate by preventing it from increasing in numbers
and splitting into segments.

595 In all the matrilineal castes the husband, whether alone or of a group, had none but
[833] sexual rights in his wife and few economic obligations. Sex-relations were called *sambandham*
('joining together'), and were initiated without religious rites. On his first visit the lover
[431] customarily presented the woman with a loin-cloth before her matrilineal kin. He might
also place a sovereign under the pillow before leaving next morning, but neither gift was
[843] obligatory. When a woman became pregnant, she must name one or more men of appropriate
sub-caste as possible fathers: this vindicated her from the charge of cohabitation with a low-
[851] caste man. The men named must jointly meet the expenses of her delivery; their payment
of this sum to the barber-midwife was a public acknowledgment that the child had been
[431] licitly begotten by a man of correct sub-caste. In addition, her lovers provided a woman with
bathing-oil, clothing, and ceremonial gifts of vegetables at the three main festivals of the year.
These payments were a sign of their continued association with her. Beyond this, a lover had
no obligations to his mistress; either of them might stop cohabitation at will.

595 With polyandrous unions, the physiological fatherhood of a child was often unknown.
851 Even when known, the father had no rights in nor obligations to his children. All the current
601 lovers of the mother were called *acchan* (father) but kinship terms were not extended to their
lineage-kin. Though he might play with his children, the father might not dispute their
564 *kāranavan*'s authority. In hypergamous unions, the higher caste father might not eat in the
house of his mistress, and, after taking a bath in the morning, might not touch her nor her
[613] children.

The Nayar Tāli-*Rite*. Though the first *sambandham* of a girl began without ceremony
613 shortly before or after puberty, she must before puberty go through the *tālikettukalyānam*.
This was collectively conducted by the lineage every ten to twelve years for all its immature
588 girls. If a girl matured before the rite was performed, she must theoretically be cast out by
[881] her lineage and banished from her village. In fact, my informants said that in this event, the
first menstruation (normally marked by public rites) would be kept secret by the lineage until
after the *tāli*-rite could be performed.

The central rite of this ceremony was, as in the ordinary marriage of Tamil patrilineal castes and of the Nambūdiris, the tying of a gold ornament (*tāli*) strung on a thread of white silk, round the neck of the girl by a ritual bridegroom (*manavalan*).

613 In the retainer sub-castes the Nayar lineages of a village, or in some cases of a group of
621 villages, formed a local sub-caste group (*tara*). Each lineage was linked by ties of ritual co-
operation to two or more other lineages of the group. These linked lineages were called
564 *enangar*. *Enangar* relations were reciprocal but not exclusive, so that in a group of eight lineages,
lineage A might be *enangar* to B, C, D, and F; B to A, E, and F; C to A, H, and G; E to B,
H, and G; F only to A and B; and H to E, D, and C. A chain of *enangar* relationships thus
indirectly linked all lineages of the local sub-caste group. *Enangar* lineages must send repre-
[692] sentatives to ceremonies of the linked lineage, e.g. the termination of birth and death pollu-
tions and the first menstruation of a girl. *Enangar* must also take note of breaches of caste
law by members of their linked lineages and report such culprits for trial by the *tara* assembly.
613 They were thus the formal links between a lineage and its assembly: they represented the
local sub-caste group (called the *enangu*) to the individual lineages. In ceremonies, they played

Nayar

much the same part as did its maternal and affinal kinsmen to a patrilineal lineage in the 613
lower castes. Individual *enangar* were moreover often of course affines (*bandhus*) to members
of the lineage. But among Nayars, the marriage-tie was so slender that individual affinal [581]
bonds were not, it seems, strong enough to unite the lineage to the rest of the sub-caste group.
This was achieved instead by a hereditary relationship between lineages as groups, which
persisted irrespective of the making and breaking of marriage ties between them.

In these retainer sub-caste groups the *tāli* must be tied by an *enangan*. Each girl had a 588
separate bridegroom, usually a youth who might have already formed *sambandham* relationships
of his own. The *tāli*-tiers were chosen at a local assembly. The choice was made by the village 613
astrologer, who compared the horoscopes of the girls with those of suitable young men and 564
fixed the auspicious date and time for the ceremony to take place.

In Kiriyattil, Samantan, and royal lineages, whose women frequently or invariably [787]
married men of higher sub-caste, the *tāli*-tier was chosen from the appropriate higher sub-
caste. Women of village headmen's lineages were commonly 'tied' by men of their district
headman's lineage, and Sāmantan women and Cochin princesses by Nambūdiri Brahmans.
Calicut princesses had the *tāli* tied by men of Kodungalur, one of the ancient ruling lineages
which had been conquered by Calicut. Similarly, Walluvanād princesses had the *tāli* tied by
men of the lineage of Beypore, a more ancient and therefore higher-ranking lineage than their
own of an adjacent small kingdom which was also feudatory to Calicut. In these sub-castes
the 'bridegroom' was usually an elderly man.

The account which follows was given by Sūdra Nayars of Pālakkara, the Cochin village 121
where I worked. In Pālakkara, the *tāli*-rite in its full form has not been performed for twenty- 588
two years, and, like many of the traditional rites of Nayars, it is doubtful if it will ever be [115]
performed again. This description refers to this most recently held ceremony, at which the
tālis were tied for nineteen girls, ranging in age from two to twelve, of a lineage comprising [114]
twelve property-groups.

The ceremony required the co-operation of the whole village, which at that time was [178]
coterminous with the *tara*. It was held in the lineage's oldest ancestral house. A shed of bamboo 588
and palm-fronds was erected before the house, the first corner-post, of areca-palm wood,
being planted ceremonially by the carpenter. A man of the temple-servant caste of Kurups 346
drew a picture of the Malabar goddess Bhagavadi on the floor of the shed, of the type drawn 621
in the village Bhagavadi temple at festivals to the goddess. Nayar men of the village then
went and cut down a branch of the milk-exuding tree of Bhagavadi from near the village 532
temple. This they planted near the corner-post in the floor of the shed, in order, informants
said, 'to bring Bhagavadi to the *taravād* and set up a temple in the house'. A plank of wood 564
of the same tree was set in the shed for each girl to sit on in turn.

All *enangar* of the lineage, and representatives of every other Nayar house in the village, 588
attended the four days of ceremonies. On the first morning, the girls went in procession to
the shrine of the lineage's *dharma devi* (goddess of moral law). This goddess, represented by a 613
stone image, is the lineage's private Bhagavadi. She is propitiated annually with cooked food [776]
to ward off sickness and misfortune. Similar offerings were made now, and the procession
returned. Young men of the lineage then went to meet the bridegrooms, who arrived on [782]
elephants with their male age-mates, accompanied by music. At the gate married women of
the lineage met them carrying brass plates each containing a lit wick, paddy, rice, and a spray 588
of coconut flowers. The bridegrooms' feet were washed by brothers of the girls and they were
seated in the marriage-shed. Near the picture of Bhagavadi were laid paddy and rice, coco-
nut flowers, the sacred brass lamp of the household, and a tray of eight auspicious objects
(*ashtamangalyam*). These included a woman's loin-cloth, a rouge-box, a bell-metal mirror,
an arrow, a coconut-spray, rice, paddy and a lit wick; they figure also in the Nambūdiri

588 marriage rite. At the auspicious time, each girl was led in turn by her brother from the house
[564] and seated on the plank. At a sign from the astrologer, the Brahman priest (called Elayad,
[793] a low sub-caste of Nambūdiris who officiate at Nayar funerals) handed the *tāli* to the bridegroom, who tied it round the girl's neck. The nineteen couples were then secluded in the house
588 for the remaining three days and nights of the rites. Informants said that in modern times when lineages were often large, the couples numerous and the girls sometimes infants, cohabita-
833 tion would be unlikely. It was not, however, forbidden, and appears formerly to have been required. It is clear that the rite was ritually if not actually a defloration ceremony, as is
178 indicated by the saying *Tāli kettiu amma āyi* ('having had the *tāli* tied, a girl becomes a [married] woman').

588 Next morning the party reassembled without the couples, and offerings to Bhagavadi took place. The participants were a Sūdra Nayar oracle (*velichchappād*), a Vattekad (oil-monger)
782 Nayar sacrificial priest, and a Nayar boy who accompanied the oracle, carrying a staff to the top of which was tied a brush of coconut flowers. These officiants perform similarly by
787 hereditary right at the annual Bhagavadi temple festival. The priest offered rice, paddy, coconuts, incense, a burning lamp, and toddy before the branch of the milk-tree, following
793 which he sacrificed a cock and poured out a vessel of red blood-like liquid. The oracle then donned a waist-band and anklets of bells and took a sickle in his hand. (These symbolize the power of Bhagavadi: when he dons them it is believed that she enters and possesses the oracle.) Accompanied by loud music, he leapt wildly in the air, shouting hoarsely and chopping his forehead with the sickle till blood flowed down. In this frenzy he called out to the host *kāranavan* that the goddess was appeased by his offerings. His possession then subsided and his insignia were removed.

776 Bhagavadi is the Malabar goddess of war, smallpox, and the soil. Her idol, in the Nayar village temple, is a hollow cylindrical stone, a symbol of the vagina, as the Brahmanical idol
[831] of Siva is the lingam, a symbol of the phallus. Bhagavadi is also worshipped as the oracle's sickle, as a picture drawn in chalks on the floor, as the milk-tree (*Alstonia scholaris*), and as the
[753] ancestral sword of a Nayar lineage. She is believed to have protected the Nayars in war. She is fierce and vengeful, her chief power being to inflict smallpox. She is propitiated by similar
[782] rites during smallpox epidemics, on the sixteenth day after a smallpox death, and on the last night of her annual temple festival, during which she is angry with the villagers who must
[834] observe sexual continence.

588 The remainder of the second day, and the third day, were devoted to feasting and music. On the fourth morning each couple went to the village bathing pool where, hand-in-hand,
[783] they took a purifying plunge-bath. Then, decked in fine clothes, they returned to the lineage house. In the kitchen each couple ate a meal from the same loaf. The company was then
[264] fed, but on this day, alone of all days, women ate before men. The bridegrooms received clothing and foodstuffs from the *kāranavan* and departed for their respective homes.

588 In Pālakkara the *tāli*-tier might remain with his bride as her first *sambandham* lover. At the last *tāli*-rite two of the nineteen bridegrooms remained in association with their brides,
184 though one abandoned his shortly afterwards. The other seventeen girls formed unions with other men of the village shortly after puberty. In all *tāli*-rites in this area, however, the 'bride-
595 groom' remained the ritual husband of his 'bride' throughout his life, though he need never visit her again. At his death, the 'wife', together with her children by whatever physiological
[765] father, must observe fifteen days' pollution. Death pollution was otherwise traditionally observed only for matrilineal kin: not until recently was it observed for the *sambandham* lover
[783] and the physiological father. The *tāli*-tier of a woman was regarded, moreover, as the ritual father of her children. If they knew him, the children called this man *appan* (the Tamil word
[851] for 'father', used for the *genitor* by Tiyyars and Christians) as distinct from *acchan* (originally

588 184 431 Rangachari (1909, V, p. 320), reports that in Travancore, the 'leading villager' gave his consent and received gifts from the bridegroom 'as if to recompense him'. This recalls the statement of one informant of Pālakkara, who said he had heard a rumour that in ancient days, the Aśān of the village had the right to deflower retainer-Nayar women, a right which he might forgo on payment of a sum of money.[1]

588 824 831 [842] [788] The *tāli* is, as Thurston & Rangachari observe, shaped like a leaf of the *Ficus religiosa* (pipal) tree (*aswātha*). This tree is worshipped by Nayars, Nambūdiris, and Tamil Brahmans as an embodiment of the Sanskrit god Vishnu. It is said to symbolize male creative power, the female tree with which it is associated being the *veppu* or margosa (*Melia Azadirachta*).[2] In the Tamil country, the two trees are frequently planted together in a mock-marriage ceremony, so that the creeping stems of the margosa may twine round the pipal tree like the arms of a faithful wife round her husband. Among Nayars, Tiyyars, Nambūdiris, and Tamil Brahmans, barren women are counselled to march a hundred and eight times round the ficus tree to obtain children. We are therefore probably justified in regarding the *tāli* as a phallic symbol, presented to the bride as a sign 'that she may now do what she pleases'.[3]

588 Innes (1908, p. 174) and Krishna Menon (1894) reports that, traditionally, the bridegroom's party approached the house flourishing weapons and shouting a war-cry. Later, before tying the *tāli*, the bridegroom laid his sword across his lap, and the girl took an arrow and a mirror in her hand. 588 184 178 776 Mateer (1883) says that in Travancore, if the family were too poor to perform the ceremonies, the girl's mother might tie her *tāli* before a sword or a clay idol representing Kāma Devan, the Hindu god of passion.[4] Similarly, since the traditional ceremony died out, many Pālakkara mothers take their immature daughters to some Brahmanical temple dedicated to Vishnu (the god of marital and domestic prosperity) and themselves tie the *tāli* before the god.

588 [593] [613] Fawcett (1901, pp. 229–32) observes that the girl's brother carried her into the marriage hall from the house, bore her three times round it, and seated her to the left of the bridegroom; Innes (1908, p. 174) remarks that she might be carried there either by her brother or her *Enangan*. On the fourth day, after their bath, the couple returned to the girl's ancestral house to find its doors shut against them. The bridegroom must force open the doors before he could take his seat with his bride in the kitchen where they ate a meal together. Alternatively, he might enter the house last in the procession, when boys of the girl's lineage pelted him with plantain fruits, which he must ward off with his shield.

[788] According to Innes (*ibid.* p. 173), before the rite the girl was secluded for three days and nights in an inner room of the house, with a brass hand-mirror in her right hand, an arrow in her left, and the eight auspicious objects before her. On the second morning she went to the bathing pool, on the bank of which she must, after bathing, jump thrice over a brass vessel of water with an unhusked coconut on top, overturning both at the third time.

588 613 564 184 833 I turn to the rite in the royal lineages. In the Cochin lineage, which prides itself on ancient, 'true' Kshattriya descent, the rite took the form of a Brahmanical marriage ceremony with Sanskrit *mantras* from the Grihya Sutras. It was performed separately for each girl before puberty by a Nambūdiri, who must actually deflower the girl on the night of the ceremonies. The bridegroom received a fee and departed after four days. The girl might then cohabit

---

[1] Dr Aiyappan (1932) similarly reports that the Aśān in some areas deflowered Nayar women at a ceremonial initiation.

[2] For a discussion of the symbolic significance of this tree see Dubois (1906, p. 652).

[3] My interpretation of the *tāli* as a phallic symbol is the more likely in that among Tamil Smartha Brahmans of Tanjore, the marriage *tāli* bears engraved upon it a *lingam*, the phallic emblem of Siva.

[4] This modern rite recalls the ceremonial marriage of the Devadasis (temple-dancers and prostitutes) in the Tamil country, in which the dedicated girl's *tāli* is tied by the temple priest before the god of the temple, or, if a girl fails to become dedicated to a god before puberty, by her mother in the presence of a sword. The 'marriage' is followed after puberty by the nuptials, at which a wealthy high caste man of the neighbourhood passes the night with the girl as the first of her lovers.

Nayar

588

with any Nambûdiri Brahman who had the consent of her *kāranavan*. Until recently, polyandry 613 564 and divorce were said by my Nayar informants to have been even commoner than among Nayars. 184

In the Zamorin's and the Walluvanād lineages the *tāli* was tied by princes of the more 833 ancient royal lineages of Kodungalur and Beypore. Actual defloration does not seem to have been obligatory in recent times. Kerr's (1811, ch 6) translation of Castaneda, however, states that

> . . . these sisters of the Zamorin, and other kings of Malabar, have handsome allowances to live upon; and, when any of them reaches the age of ten, their kindred send for a young man of the Nayar caste out of the kingdom, and give him presents to induce him to initiate the young virgin; after which he hangs a jewel around her neck, which she wears all the rest of her life as a token that she is now at liberty to dispose of herself to anyone she pleases as long as she lives.

Of the Zamorin's own marriage to a Nayar wife, Hamilton (1727, p. 172), a Scottish 585 trader, wrote in 1723:

> When the Zamorin marries, he must not cohabit with his bride till the Nambourie or chief 793 Priest has enjoyed her, and, if he pleases, may have Three Nights of her Company, because the first Fruits of her nuptials must be an holy Oblation to the God she worships; and some of the nobles are so complaisant as to allow the Clergy the same Tribute; but the common people cannot have that Compliment paid to them, but are forced to supply the Priest's place themselves.

Barbosa (Stanley, 1866, p. 124), writing in a more robust age, 1510, says of the Nayar 588 commoners: 'And from that time forward [i.e. after the *tāli*-rite] the mother goes begging 833 some young men to deflower the girl, for among themselves they hold it an unclean thing and almost a disgrace to deflower women.'

The immediate significance of the *tāli*-rite for Nayars of this area, taken in conjunction 588 with their combined polyandry and polygyny, is clear. A Nayar *taravād* is perpetuated by its women. Hence the extraordinary value set by Nayars on obtaining a sufficiency of husbands 613 and thus of children for their lineage. The *tāli*-rite dramatizes this need of the lineage for male sexual partners who ('like breeding bulls', as a Calicut prince remarked) will fulfil 182 the one role denied to men of the lineage in respect of their sisters and nieces. The bridegroom's role as *enangan* was significant in a caste community in which sex relations were promiscuous. In this rite, through a chosen representative, the local caste group as a whole 'married' the lineage as a whole, and ritually set free the procreative powers of its girls to perpetuate [586] their lineage. The ritual 'divorce' on the fourth day freed the girls from their particular bridegrooms, as the fee which accompanied it freed their lineage from further obligations to these men. If he wished to perpetuate the relationship, the ritual bridegroom must come again in a different role, without prior claims, merely as one of a series of lovers. The 'divorce' foreshadows the jealousy with which Nayar men regard the post-puberty lovers of their sisters: these are prevented from interfering in household matters, and may be dismissed by the brothers in a momentary fit of pique. The separation of the *tāli*-rite (the ritual marriage) from the later *sambandham* unions (initiated without rites) thus underlines the necessity to the lineage of husbands and fathers, while denying to the individual husband and father a legally and socially significant role in relation to his wife and children.

The tying of the *tāli*, in aristocratic lineages, by a Nambûdiri Brahman or other personage 588 of higher caste in place of an *enangan*, fits in with the custom of hypergamous marriage. 564 The higher caste bridegroom's role gives ceremonial recognition to the overlordship of *nāduvaris* over *desavaris*, of kings over *nāduvaris*, and in religious matters, of Nambûdiri Brahmans over all. The higher caste lover had no more rights in his mistress than the Nayar and even fewer obligations to her. At the same time the function in the political and economic systems of these high caste men's roles as ritual and physiological husbands and fathers to members [178] of the castes below them must not be underestimated. Today the old political system has

588 collapsed and the old system of differential land-rights between Nambūdiris and rulers on
● 564 the one hand and their Nayar tenants on the other has been seriously undermined. Yet even
today Nayars remark with pride that their lineage has 'fathers' in the lineages of their former
178 landlords and chiefs, while chiefs and royalty alike revere their Nambūdiri *genitors*, and boast
that the blood of these Gods of the earth is running in their veins.

131 PART II. THE NAYAR *Tali*-RITE IN NORTH MALABAR

133 NORTH MALABAR LIES NORTH OF THE KORA RIVER, being the old kingdoms of Kolattiri,
Kurumbrattiri, and Kadattunad. Except for the coast-towns expanded by Europeans, it is
361 sparsely populated and mountainous; part of it is forest. Villages lie separated by hill ranges,
usually as clusters of houses on the hillsides surrounding small wet paddy-flats in the valleys.
[635] This contrasts with South Malabar and Cochin, where the coastal plain is wider, paddy-land
extensive, and settlement usually continuous between villages.

175 Perhaps because of its difficult environment, North Malabar did not before 1792 approach
the degree of political centralization achieved in the central area. The Kolattiri Rajas, it is
631 true, temporarily conquered Kottayam, Kurumbranad, and Kadattunad, but the area was
never consolidated as was the Zomorin's kingdom. Within the small kingdoms, *nāduvaris*
[628] fought each other and rebelled against their Rajas, allying themselves with different rulers
as suited their needs of the moment. Neighbouring *desavaris* sometimes fought each other within
[627] the *nād*, while within the *desam*, *kudipaga* (lineage-feud) persisted till modern times.

Consistent with this lack of political centralization, high-class Nayars were not divided
564 into sub-castes with administrative and occupational functions. Instead they had exogamous
clans, dispersed between many villages. In Kottayam and Kolattunad the bulk of Nayars
631 were Nambiars, independent land-owners owing only nominal allegiance to a chief. *Desavaris*,
613 appointed by the Raja or the *nāduvari*, had administrative powers in their villages but belonged
to the same sub-caste as other Nambiars. In most villages the land was divided between the
423 Nayar property-groups as owners, Nayar tenancies being less common than in the south.
[614] *Nāduvari* lineages, however, usually owned the land in the whole village where they lived,
employed Nambiar tenants as retainers, and claimed superior caste-rank, calling themselves
Samantan Nambiars. Nambūdiri Brahmans are fewer in the north than in the south, especi-
ally since the Muslim invasions from Mysore in the 1760s, when many fled to Travancore.
Those who remain live as landlords in widely separated villages, with local Nambiar lineages
as retainers. The Nayar servant castes are spatially distributed as in the south. The lower
polluting castes of manual workers are present in similar proportions, but Tiyyars and their
washermen and barbers are matrilineal in North Malabar, patrilineal in the south.

613 *The Nayar Kinship System*. North Malabar Nayars, though trained in arms in the private
[701] gymnasia of their lineages, were not recruited as a permanent militia of the kingdom. Instead
they cultivated their own lands with the aid of Tiyyar tenants, the serf castes being absent over
[566] most of the area. It seems largely because of this difference of occupation, North Malabar
Nayars are virilocal: a wife moves on marriage to the ancestral house of her husband, and
591 remains with him with rare exceptions till his death. Her children are brought up by their
father and commonly return to their own lineage at puberty. A boy then begins to manage
613 his *taravād* property under the direction of his *kāranavan*, while a girl is shortly afterwards
594 married, from the lineage house, by common consent of her *kāranavan* and her father, often to
[582] the *kāranavan*'s son or to a maternal nephew of the father.

Divorce is permitted, but is rarer than in the south. Polygyny is rare, polyandry even
586 traditionally forbidden. A cuckolded husband formerly cut off the hair of his wife and returned
595 her to her lineage. The *genitor* has customary rights in and obligations to his children. In
684
851

594

In
addition to maintaining his wife he is expected but not strictly obliged to maintain his children 613
till puberty, though both wife and children may claim maintenance from their lineage as
well. Paternal kin are known and accorded kinship terms within a range of three to five genera- 851
tions. Marriage is prohibited between the children of brothers. The *enangar* relationship form-
erly existed between lineages of the same local group: individual *enangar* represented the 601
group to the lineage at funerals and kept watch over its observance of caste laws. In most 582
rites, however, patrilateral kin and affines filled the the roles filled by *enangar* in South Malabar. 613

The post-puberty *sambandham* is initiated with ceremonies and feasting, the central rite
being the handing of a loin-cloth by the man to the woman in the presence of his age-mates 585
and her kin. After consummation in the bride's house, the couple go to the husband's house
where they are ceremonially received by elders. Children must be born in the mother's ances- 851
tral house, but paternal kin assert their claims in rites shortly after the birth. Physiological
paternity is, of course, seldom in doubt, and sibling-groups refer to themselves proudly as
'the children of such-and-such' [their father's] lineage', for whose members they commonly
exhibit greater affection, though less loyalty, than they do for matrilineal kinsmen.

The Nayar Tāli-*Rite*. Though the North Malabar *sambandham* was a 'real' marriage, the 588
pre-puberty *tāli* rite was conducted as in the south. Unfortunately, I lack details of this rite
either from the literature or from informants. Among Nambiars of Kottayam the ceremonies
lasted four days and were conducted in a marriage shed, the areca-palm corner-post and the
branch of the milk-tree being planted ceremonially as in the south. A temple-servant woman
drew a chalk pattern to represent Bhagavadi and made offerings of rice, paddy, and coconuts
before it. Before the *tāli* was tied on the first day, men of the temple drummers' caste of Marars,[1] [564]
who here rank below Nayars and at their funerals direct offerings to the spirit, placed gold
bangles on the upper arms of the 'brides' and addressed them for the first time as *amma* [301]
('mother', or 'married lady'). After the rite, the Marars received the bangles as payment. At a
sign from the astrologer, a Nambūdiri Brahman tied the *tāli* for each girl. The couples were
secluded for three days and the 'marriage' ended with a ceremonial bath on the fourth day.
Unless (as was rare in this area) the Nambūdiri wished to visit the girl as her regular husband
after puberty, he might not cohabit with her again. The *tāli*-tier was not called *appan* by the [851]
children, nor was he regarded as their ritual father. Children even traditionally observed
death pollution not for this ritual bridegroom of the mother but for the *genitor*, at whose [765]
funeral rites they played a part only second in importance to the deceased's younger brothers
and sisters' children. Informants did not think that the 'bride' observed pollution for her [783]
tāli-tier's death; she did, however, traditionally observe pollution for her *sambandham* husband
unless divorced before his death.

In Samantan Nambiar *nāduvari* lineages, as among Nambiars, the *tāli* was tied by a 588
Nambūdiri. *Sambandham* unions sometimes took place between *nāduvari* lineages of equal
rank; more commonly, as in the south, *nāduvari* men married Nambiar women and Samantan 613
Nambiar women married royal or Nambūdiri men. In the ancient Kshattriya lineages of
Kottayam and Kurumbranad the *tāli* was tied by a Nambūdiri, and women of these lineages
later had Nambūdiris as husbands, the princes marrying 'down' with women of chiefly or
village headmen's lineages. The Kolattiri lineage, which is less ancient and not acknowledged [564]
to be 'truly' Kshattriya, is said to have been a branch of the Travancore royal lineage which
moved its site long ago. Kolattiri women had the *tāli* tied by men of a caste called Koil Tamburans, ancient Kshattriya families of Travancore who had been conquered by the Travancore Maharajas, and some of whom were brought to North Malabar by the Kolattiri

---

[1] In South Malabar Marars are a temple-servant caste of drummers ranking slightly above Nayars. Nayar funeral rites are conducted by the lower Nayar sub-caste of Attikurissis (Chidigans in Cochin). In North Malabar, Marars rank below Nayars, and conduct Nayar funeral rites, there being no separate subcaste of funeral priests in the north.

Nayar
Tiyyar

588 Rajas to assist at their ceremonies. Kolattiri women married Koil Tamburan or Nambūdiri
613 men, and Kolattiri men Samantan Nambiar or Nambiar women. In the Kadattunad lineage,
which once owed fealty to Kolattiri as an ordinary chiefly lineage, the *tāli* was tied by Kolattiri
564 princes. Women of the lineage married Kolattiri or Nambūdiri men, and men, chiefly women
[582] of or village headmen's lineages of their kingdoms.

It is clear that, at least for the 'ordinary' Nambiars who married almost exclusively with
each other, the *tāli*-rite was no more than an initiation ceremony giving the girl the status
58 of a married woman. It is fitting that the *tāli* should not be tied by an *enangan*, for, polyandry
564 being prohibited, the girls of a lineage were not married collectively to the local group as a
whole. Since the *sambandham* union was permanent, the husband's sexual rights exclusive, and
182 the father accorded legal, ritual, and social rights, it is difficult to explain this rite in terms of social function. It is true, of course, that like all Nayar rites it had the function of identifying the Nayars as a group with customs distinctive from those of other groups. It may also be possible to argue that it gave ritual recognition to the overlordship of Nambūdiris. It was not, however, as in South Malabar, closely in keeping with the political and economic systems, either in the kingdom or the village. Nambūdiri landlords were few, and many Nayars would have to call for the rite Nambūdiris of distant villages to whom they had no relationship as retainers.

613 Similarly, the *tāli*-rite in the Kolattiri lineage seems to have resulted less from the lineage's
bond to the Koil Tamburans, than the reverse: for, if we are to believe informants, the Koil
588 Tamburans were brought from Travancore expressly to perform the *tāli*-rite and assist at
other ceremonies of the Kolattiri lineage. I am not prepared to state that the North Malabar
182 *tāli*-rite had no other social function, since I never saw it and the evidence is incomplete. It seems, however, that certain aspects of the rite, both in north and south, cannot be explained in terms of social function but only in terms of psychological motivations. This I defer until I have discussed the place of this rite in the kinship systems of North and South Malabar Tiyyars.

429

PART III. THE TIYYAR KINSHIP SYSTEM AND *Tāli*-RITE IN NORTH MALABAR

THE TIYYARS FARM LAND leased on short-term tenures from Nayars and live in the low-caste
621 quarters of the same villages. In this area they are matrilineal. Like Nayars, they were organized
613 into *taras*, the hereditary headman (Tandan) of the *tara* being responsible to the *desavari* for the administration of caste law among Tiyyars and the lower castes.[1]

613 Each *tara* might contain ten to twelve Tiyyar lineages and one each of Tiyyar washermen (Vannāns, called Mannāns in the south) and barbers (Kāvutiyyans, called Vāthis in
[621] the south). The Tiyyar lineage, like the Nayar, is exogamous, is united by birth and death
pollutions, the worship of a lineage goddess, and snake-worship, and is divided into property-
[564] groups each containing a sibling group together with the children and maternal grand-
children of the sisters. The Tiyyars, like the Nayars, have dispersed matrilineal exogamous
[614] clans. In this area (but not in South Malabar) Tiyyar men may hypergamously marry women
[582] of the Tiyyar barber (but not the washerman) caste.

Tiyyars, like Nayars, are predominantly virilocal. Unlike Nayars, Tiyyar men, having
little ancestral property, may remain with the father and build a house on land leased from
[591] Nayars near the father's dwelling-group. Though filiation is officially matrilineal, and children
[429] retain rights in any land or houses their matrilineal group may own, the *local* descent-group,
persisting over three to four generations, is therefore often patrilineal. Polyandry is forbidden,

---

[423] [1] I have no information on the *mangar* institution of North Malabar Tiyyars. Dr Aiyappan's (1944, *passim*) discussion
of the Tiyyar *mangar* system seems, from my knowledge of Tiyyars, to apply only to patrilineal Tiyyars of South Malabar.
000 In Kottayam informants did not remember the institution which, if it existed, must have died out thirty to fifty years ago

likeliest if his lineage is wealthier than his father, his parents divorced or his *kāranavan* sonless. 58 Patrilateral cross-cousin marriage is likeliest if the father has no personal property to leave to 605 his son, if the father has no nephews, or if the husband has quarrelled with his *kāranavan*.

The cross-cousin's claim to become a girl's husband, seen in the *tāli*-rite, must be met at the later marriage ceremony if the girl marries some other man. As the couple leave the house, the girl's cross-cousin steps forward in mock attack, formerly with a sword. He is bought off by the bridegroom with a nominal fee and the couple then pass unmolested.

The tying of the *tāli* by a potential mother-in-law foreshadows the later role of the wife 58 as a subordinate who performs menial tasks under her guidance. Nayar women in North 591 Malabar, too, do housework under the mother-in-law's supervision and customarily behave submissively to her. But their work is not obligatory, and a Nayar wife may decide to live for [606] long periods in her *taravād* and receive her husband there; unless she denies him sexual rights this will not be seen as adequate grounds for divorce. Though the system is nominally matrilineal, a Tiyyar wife lacks this privilege. At marriage, the payments of dowry and earnest money transfer the rights in her domestic services to her husband's group and place on them the burden of her maintenance. Her desertion would therefore be grounds for divorce by the husband.

In my Kottayam village the barber woman, as well as conducting the 'cooking' rites, 588 tied the *tāli* herself. Informants stated that the *ammāyi* (mother's brother's wife, or prospective 564 mother-in-law) must be present; they knew, moreover, that in some areas she tied the *tāli*. They were unable to explain this difference of custom. Among Tiyyar washermen and barbers 606 themselves, the *tāli* was tied by an old man of the caste not previously related to the girl.

The North Malabar Tiyyar woman's *tāli* may therefore be tied by her prospective mother-in-law, by a woman of a lower, polluting caste or (among barbers and washermen) by a respected elder of the community. It is difficult to find a sociological explanation of why these three persons should be regarded as comparable, i.e. capable of fulfilling the role of initiating girls into womanhood. In the case of the mother-in-law, we have seen that other facts about Tiyyar kinship to some extent explain the form of the rite. Even here, however, it is difficult to explain why it is necessary at all. To what end must a girl observe mock menstrual seclusion before she has menstruated? To what end must she go through a form of marriage, carried out by her prospective mother-in-law, a barber woman, or an elderly man, before she is of age to marry? I revert to these questions after describing the Tiyyar ceremony in South Malabar and Cochin.

PART IV. THE TIYYAR KINSHIP SYSTEM AND *TĀLI*-RITE IN SOUTH MALABAR AND COCHIN 564

HERE, AS IN THE NORTH, Tiyyars rank below Nayars as the highest 'polluting' caste and are 613 tenant-farmers and coconut-growers. But in this area they have, like the other lower castes above serfs, localized, named patrilineal lineages comparable in size and distribution with the matrilineal lineages of the north. The lineage is exogamous; it has a depth of about five to seven generations; is united by the observance of pollutions, by the worship of patrilineal ancestors, of a lineage-god and of snakes, and is sometimes subdivided into property-groups three to five generations deep. The lineage, like the North Malabar Tiyyar and the Nayar matrilineage, is called a *taravād*.

The internal organization of the local caste group of the *tara* was similar to North Malabar, 613 with a hereditary headman (Tandan) whose powers derived from the *desavari*. The *enangar* [621] relationship was remembered by my informants, though it began to die out about twenty years ago. Each lineage had a single *enangar* lineage through which it was linked to the group. *Enangar* obligations were reciprocal and exclusive. Tiyyar *enangar*, moreover, unlike Nayar,

Tiyyar

[South Malabar and Cochin]

presence of *mangar*. The young children of a divorced woman might return with her to her 586
brother's house, but had the right to go back before puberty to their fathers' house.

In this system the husbands obtain both sexual and procreative rights in their wife, her 595
children becoming members of their patrilineal group. The wife herself does not, however, as
among Brahmans, become wholly incorporated as a member of her husband's lineage. A 613
sonless widow whose husband left no brothers had no rights to property or maintenance by 851
his family; she must return to her brother's house. She could not, as among Brahmans, adopt
on behalf of her husband or temporarily manage his property in the absence of adult kinsmen. [589]
Though her children belong to the husband's group, the wife appears as in North Malabar
to be only temporarily 'leased' by the husbands, on payments of the *kānam* sum, for her sexual [581]
and domestic services.

Moreover, though a woman cannot inherit property in her natal *taravād*, the bond 593
between brother and sister remains strong. The eldest brother is early regarded as the guardian 613
of his sisters, who observe partial avoidance and respect to him much as in a Nayar *taravād*.
It is significant that at divorce, a woman is returned to her brother, not to her father or the 428
headman of her patrilineal group. At the death of a married woman, her brothers and their 586
children observe pollution in their own dwelling-group, assembling at the deceased's conjugal
house on the sixteenth day for final rites to the spirit. At the death of a man, his sisters' sons
have pollution, assemble at his house, and in the sixteen days of mourning perform offerings 593
to the spirit immediately after the deceased's sons, and before his younger brothers and 765
paternal grandchildren. At the death of a man, his sisters and daughters make offerings to
an image of the deceased on the fourteenth day, but the widow herself (unlike the Brahman [782]
widow) takes no part in death rites. This shows the strong tie persisting between a married
woman and her natal group, and the comparative lack of integration into the group of the 593
women who marry its men. The former existence of exogamous matrilineal clans underlines
this persistence of the bond between women and their natal kinsfolk, especially their brothers.[1]

The Tiyyar Tāli-*Rite*. A girl's *tāli* was tied before puberty by a boy, usually a small child, 588
of some local *taravād*, affinal or unrelated, into which the girl might marry. My informants
in Cochin and Walluvanād could not remember the details of the rite, which has died out
in the last twenty years. They knew that it must be done before puberty, and that the *tāli*-tier sometimes married the girl after puberty by the usual ceremonies.

According to Thurston & Rangachari (1909, VII, pp. 80–1), who describe the rite in [787]
Chavakkad, between Calicut and Cochin, Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909–12, I, pp. 285–
7) who describes it for Cochin, and Aiyappan (1944, pp. 159–60) for the whole central area,
the horoscopes were compared as for a marriage. The artisans provided an arrow and a
brass mirror which the girl carried in her hand, a plank of the milk-tree, the rouge-bottle
which figures in the eight auspicious objects, and a staff carried by the bridegroom. The [564]
local *Pānan* (a low caste of sorcerers and menial workers) brought a peacock-feather umbrella
for the girl and a 'war umbrella' for the boy. A week in advance, the carpenter planted the
south-east corner-post of the shed at an auspicious moment. For three days before the rites,
the girl was secluded as if she had menstruated. On the day before the rites, she was taken to
worship the sun, and was seated in the marriage-hall on a plank with a lit lamp, a vessel of
water, rice, plantain-fruits, and a coconut before her. Her mother's brother's wife parted her
hair and placed a gold coin on her crown, and the Tandan's wife (like the barber in North
Malabar) anointed this three times with oil, here poured from a leaf of the *jak* tree. The girl
took a ceremonial bath and was secluded in the house with a casket, a bell-metal mirror, and
a sword on a stool beside her.

---

[1] The tie between sisters is also close. They and their children observe pollution for each others' deaths, and the sororate (forbidden among Nayars and North Malabar Tiyyars) sometimes confirms the status of the mother's sister as a proxy mother. [587]

Nayar
Tiyyar

184
and coconut symbolize female fertility. The couple's act of eating from the same leaf, and the Tiyyar girl's act of mixing sweet porridge, grinding with a grindstone, and 'cohabiting' 588
with the loin-cloth of the bridegroom, may be interpreted as symbolic intercourse. 831

In the North Malabar Tiyyar rite the barber as well as the *táli*-tier appears as a vicarious bridegroom. Before the *táli* is tied, he uncovers the girl's face and head, an act performed by [564] the bridegroom in many Hindu marriage-rites. He then places coins in her hair and pours on to them coconut water from an *aswatha* leaf. Since this leaf represents Vishnu and male creative power, I regard the pouring of coconut water from it on to the coins as symbolic intercourse.[1] The barber is paid in cloths for his services, much as the ritual bridegroom is paid in South Malabar Nayar and Tiyyar rites.

In all the groups, then, it was necessary for a girl to be, at least symbolically, deflowered before puberty. Next, the girl is secluded for three days before the rite under circumstances almost identical with those of the first menstruation. Like a woman during that period, she [881] might not eat meat, salt, tamarind or chillies, nor see a man, tree, plant, crow, dog, or cat. Among the Tiyyars, Thurston (1906, p. 3) reports that in some areas she kept an arrow, said to be the arrow of Kama Devan, always beside her.

This seclusion with an arrow looks like symbolic cohabitation with a token bridegroom, as in the South Malabar Tiyyar girl's seclusion with the loin-cloth of the bridegroom *after* [841] the *táli*-rite. At the same time, it must be noted that among Tiyyars, Nayars, and also some Tamil castes, a woman keeps beside her a knife during menstruation; it is said to ward off [789] attack by evil spirits.

These observances of the first menstruation and of the mock-menstruation before the *táli*- 841 rite must be seen in the context of a set of beliefs concerning menstruation in general. It is believed that a Nayar or Tiyyar woman is in a dangerous as well as a polluting condition during menstruation, especially the first. It is feared that, if she disregards any of the prohibitions, she may be raped by evil spirits, appearing as hairy animals. This circumstance [833] results in hysterical, dissociated behaviour or in dangerous loss of blood. It is said also that if a man foolhardily copulated with a menstruous woman, he would become impotent. Similarly, if the woman were to urinate at the base of a tree, or walk in a paddy-field, the tree or the paddy would wither and die. If she were to approach a temple or the ancester-shrine of her *taravád*, the temple-god or the ancestors might inflict her with excessive bleeding, or strike her dead.

To interpret these beliefs, I make use of Ernest Jones's (1931, pp. 44, 54, 73) theory 000 that the evil spirits of myths, superstitious beliefs, and daytime phantasies arise from the same unconscious source as those of nightmares, and that the evil shapes seen in nightmares invariably issue from repressed incestuous desires, the fear engendered by which causes the desired object to appear in terrible form. The hairy animal-spirits who may rape a menstruous woman are thus male parent-imagines. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact of the fear of attack from a god or dead *káranavan*'s spirit (patrilineal among South Malabar Tiyyars, matrilineal in the other groups), should the menstruous woman approach them. Since it causes dangerous bleeding, the attack by a god or an ancestor is evidently sexual, like that by the hairy animals: all therefore probably indicate an unconscious dread of being raped by a male parental figure with, underlying this, a repressed incestuous desire.[2]

The fact that evil spirits attack when the woman breaks the prohibitions (e.g. on seeing a man, or some other animal or plant phallic symbol) may reflect fear of the unconscious

[1] For the sexual significance of anointing in general see Ernest Jones (1931, pp. 207-8). Alternatively we may regard the barber's act as that of a paternal figure who, by anointing her, confers fertility on the girl.

[2] Melanie Klein (1932, p. 307) notes that the European girl at puberty frequently exhibits fear that her father may attack and copulate with her in a sadistic way, either because she has had sadistic masturbation phantasies about her mother or because he wishes to get back the penis she has taken from him.

Nayar
Tiyyar

000 sexual jealousy of the natal kinsmen (projected on to spirits, gods, and ancestors) aroused by a
[262] woman's marital sexuality. The prohibitions on eating meat and condiments are those
stipulated for both men and women in all periods of pollution and also in periods of abstention
[783] to obtain ritual purity before worshipping a god. Since these foods are believed to induce sexual
desire, this prohibition is equated by informants with abstention from sexual intercourse
[834] (also enjoined in all periods of pollution or of enhanced ritual purity) and thus is comparable
here to the prohibition on seeing a man or other male sexual symbol and of refraining from
marital intercourse.

The practice of a girl's arming herself with a knife or an arrow during menstruation may signify an unconscious desire on the part of women to appropriate and arm themselves with the penis of the prohibited parent, or with any phallic symbol, and thus obviate the dreaded incestuous attack. Since the dread is also unconsciously a desire, this hypothesis is not incompatible with the other, that the knife and arrow are phallic symbols (perhaps paternal) with which the girl, by keeping them beside her, symbolically cohabits in the seclusion period.

On the side of men, the planting of an arrow by the girl's brother near the bathing pool after her first menstruation may be a sign of the brother's unconscious desire to copulate with his sister, or to drive away unwanted parental figures (the mother's brother or the father) whose sexual attack the girl both dreads and unconsciously desires. The same incestuous desire on the part of the brother appears in a South Malabar Nayar rite at the first menstruation, where the brother breaks a sheath containing coconut buds with his knife and counts the buds which roll out as an augur of the number of children his sister will bear.

It seems probable that in general the menstruous woman is unconsciously equated by a man with his mother as a forbidden sexual object; hence the fear of approaching her, based on unconscious fear of castration by the father. This view finds support in the beliefs that a man becomes impotent if he copulates with a menstruous woman, and that, by extension, trees and plants wither and die if she urinates or walks upon them. As is well known, the fear of impotence frequently indicates an unconscious fear of being castrated by the father for a sexual approach to the mother. The particular fear of the menstruous woman may lead back to an infantile belief, common in our own society, that parental intercourse is a sadistic attack by the father in which the mother is wounded and bleeds. The fact that the menstruous woman is armed with a knife or an arrow recalls an allied phantasy common among European infants, of the phallic mother who by intercourse has possessed herself of the father's penis and is thus doubly terrifying since, if one approached her, the penis would attack (castrate) oneself. (Klein 1932, pp. 103, 189-90.)

Why is it deemed necessary for a girl to 'menstruate' and be deflowered (both symbolically) before she has attained puberty and is likely to enter into real sex relations? The first part of my hypothesis is that this rite issues out of the marked horror of incest in these castes, which makes it necessary for the natal kinsmen of a woman to renounce the rights in her mature sexuality before she is in fact mature.

184 Among the Nayars and North Malabar Tiyyars descent is matrilineal and the *ius in
genitricem* of a woman remains with her matrilineage headed by her *kāranavan*. This man is
613 usually her mother's brother and later her own elder brother. In all these castes but particularly among South Malabar Nayars, a woman must implicitly obey these kinsmen,
564 sometimes to the extent of divorcing her husband of whom they are overtly jealous. The
602 horror with which these castes regard incest within the lineage, however, makes the etiquette
of behaviour between a woman and older men of her lineage formalized to the point of avoidance.
[586] She may not sit before them, speak to them except under necessity, nor be alone with
one of them. In the royal lineages a prince should not see his mature younger sisters and
maternal nieces except on ceremonial occasions.

Nayar
Tiyyar

613 This partial avoidance between a woman and her older natal kinsmen begins after the
602 *tāli*-rite, when she receives the title *amma* (lit. 'mother'). In the rite, it seems, the girl is fictitiously
588 made mature by the mock menstrual seclusion – before she is in danger of actually becoming mature; her sexuality is then given away by her natal kinsmen to a vicarious husband
182 outside her lineage. For this is the one right in her forbidden to her natal kinsmen; the rest – her domestic services and procreative power – remain theirs throughout her life.
184 Even among North Malabar Nayars and Tiyyars, with their virilocal residence, the brother may call home his sister and her children and require her to divorce her husband. He must, moreover, maintain her if she is divorced, and her children have the right to return to the mother's brother's house as his heirs.

182 The unconscious desire for adelphic incest in these matrilineal castes appears in other
184 rites. I have mentioned the rites performed by the brother of a girl at her first menstruation
593 among South Malabar Nayars and North Malabar Tiyyars. Later, when the South Malabar Nayar woman was in the fifth or seventh month of her pregnancy, she was formerly seated
613 before her brother who poured tamarind juice into her mouth from the point of the *taravād*'s ancestral sword. It was believed that he thus conveyed strength (*sakthi*, a generalized form of
843 energy believed to reside *par excellence* in semen) and also martial valour, into the body of the
[827] first-born child. This seems a clear instance of the brother's unconscious wish to impregnate his sister himself, as well as an explicit recognition that, in matriliny, the mother's brother has
[822] the rights of a *pater* in the child.

Among South Malabar Tiyyars the tamarind-juice is given by the pregnant woman's
[607] brother to her husband, and by the husband's sister to his wife. This rite is more in keeping with a patrilineal system in which the husband has primary procreative rights in his wife. At the same time, it seems likely that the rite reflects the brother's unconscious desire to pass his 'strength' to his sister and her child, through the husband, and the sister's desire to contribute to the making of the child, and thus usurp the role of her brother's wife. The rite is beautifully in keeping with double unilineal descent, in which brothers and sisters retain strong interest and rights in each others' offspring.

184 The unconscious fear, and underlying it, an unconscious desire, of women for sexual attack
843 from a male parental figure (the father in this case) probably appears also in the South Malabar Tiyyar rites which precede the tamarind-drinking. These are to drive out evil spirits who may
789 attack the child in the womb. The woman sits at night before a group of washermen (Mannans) who invoke the spirit in song, and perform devil-dancing in weird masks. By morning, the more
182 susceptible of the women present, overcome by the spirit, may go into fits. Finally a live cock
[564] is held against the woman's forehead, and rice thrown over her head. If she has a fit, the cock is beheaded and its blood offered to the evil spirit. The rites are paid for by the woman's
[787] father. In view of what is known of the beliefs concerning incubi in western societies (Jones 1931, ch. 3), it seems probable that these rites issue from the unconscious female fear of being
[782] attacked sexually by the father, and the recognition of the father's unconscious desire to kill the child in his daughter's womb. The Mannan devil-dancers (who sometimes consciously impersonate the dead ancestors of a propitiating Tiyyar lineage) may be interpreted to represent the woman's lineage forbears and thus, collectively, her father.[1]

000 Again, in all the groups studied the *taravād* is believed to be guarded by a group of snake-

---

[1] This interpretation is practically certain in view of the almost identical ceremony carried out one year after the death of a South Malabar Tiyyar. It is believed that before this the spirit is earth-bound and cannot be invoked to pass to heaven. On the night fixed, small girls of the *taravād* sit before Mannan and Panan devil-dancers who, as in the pregnancy ceremonies, wear weird masks and sing to invoke the spirit. Late at night one of the girls may become possessed by it and talk like the deceased, and give commands to the family about its future conduct. After this ceremony the spirit is freed from its bonds to the earth (see Thurston and Rangachari 1909, VII, p. 91). Since the possession of the girls by an ancestral spirit here is of the same kind as in the pregnancy rites and both types of spirit are called *predham*, there seems little doubt that the evil spirit who attacks is also ancestral and thus an *imar*.

Nayar

613 Again in all the groups studied the

776 taravād is believed to be guarded by a group of snake-
564 gods (*nagas*) who reside in the small grove in the south-east corner of the ancestral gardens. 182 If they are offended, the snakes inflict the *taravād* with barrenness among women, disease, and child-deaths. They are propitiated by the low caste of Pulluvar. A Pulluvar and his wife 184 come to the Nayar or Tiyyar grove and draw figures of the serpents in green, red, yellow, and black. They sing songs of entreaty to the snakes, and play on a musical instrument, while one 782 or more women of the propitiating *taravād*, who have observed sexual continence and food taboos for several days previously, dance round the figures with hair streaming. The snakes 787 then 'enter the bodies' of these women, who behave in a dissociated manner and speak with the voice of the possessing snake-spirit, announcing to *taravād* members the kind of propitiation necessary to overcome their wrath. Since they are the guardians of the *taravād*, are jealous of the marital sexuality of women born into it, can inflict them with barrenness, and periodically 'enter into' them, it seems likely that these totemic snakes are unconsciously regarded as phallic symbols of the *taravād*'s male forbears (whether matrilineal or patrilineal). Their 'possession' of the women would thus reflect the incestuous desires of women towards men of the parental generation in the *taravād*, and secondarily towards their brothers.

593 I have discussed in general terms the probable existence of unconscious incestuous desires between the individual and members of the parental generation and, as an extension 182 of this, between siblings. We must now face the problem of whether, in the matrilineal castes, a regular Oedipus complex exists: that is, of whether a man unconsciously wishes to kill his father and appropriate his mother, and whether a girl harbours murderous wishes towards her mother and incestuous ones towards her father.[1]

There seems little doubt that in the matrilineal as in the patrilineal castes, a 'normal' Oedipus complex must develop in early infancy. Even among South Malabar Nayars the physiological function of the male in procreation is clearly acknowledged, and a child is expected to resemble its father as well as its matrilineal kin. The Nayar infant must, moreover, be aware of the marital relationship between its parents, since it commonly sleeps in the 593 mother's room until the age of about four or until the next sibling is born. At about the age of five to six, however, a change takes place in the relationship between a South Malabar Nayar 604 child and its parental generation, and thus, we may suppose, in its unconscious attitudes to 182 these figures. A boy now comes under the discipline of his mother's brothers, and a relationship of reverence with underlying hostility begins to be formed. A girl becomes aware that her mother's brothers are her ultimate guardians and, though she may still approach them freely, she must submit to them. The father drops into the background. In a traditional household, whereas he might play with them freely as babies, he may not now interfere in the upbringing of his children. Even today, he may be already divorced and replaced by another husband: in Palakkara sixteen out of seventy Nayar sibling groups containing children under [578] the age of fifteen had no contact with the *genitor* or his kin. The mother's brother thus takes over a great part of the role of *pater*. The relationship admits, however, greater conscious hostility than does the patrilineal father-child relationship. Despite the reverence demanded in public, Nayar men sometimes remark privately that they harbour murderous feeling towards their *kāranavan*: several have in fact killed him. Such conscious hostility to the father would be almost unheard of in a high patrilineal caste. The partial avoidance required between a man and his sister's son, and the extreme formality of their behaviour, reflect this underlying hostility. The relationship with the elder brother is, in etiquette, modelled on that

[114] [1] My data, as far as Malabar matriliny is concerned, contradict Malinowski's (1916) theory that the Oedipus complex is absent from the start in matrilineal societies and is replaced by the wish to marry the sister and kill the maternal uncle. They confirm Ernest Jones's (1924) conclusion that a normal Oedipus complex exists in matrilineal as in patrilineal societies, but that in matriliny repressed incestuous desire for the mother is extended to an unusual degree to the sister, and much unconscious hostility to the father deflected towards the mother's brother. Roheim's (1950, ch. 3) refutation of Malinowski's view and his analysis of the Oedipus complex of Normanby Island are also relevant.

Nayar
Tiyyar

588 182 184 *sambandham* lover he came in a different role. Among South Malabar Tiyyars the prospective husband might tie the *tāli*. But in this case, too, his roles were kept separate: the post-puberty marriage rites must be gone through if the bridegroom (with his brothers) became permanently married to the girl. In any case the ritual bridegroom was usually a small boy; this is the important point here. Among North Malabar Tiyyars a potential mother-in-law tied the *tāli*, or else the barber woman, though in this ceremony the barber is protagonist in the rites marking the girl's passage to womanhood. In the higher matrilineal castes, and among North Malabar Tiyyar barbers, the rite is performed by an elder of high rank. Among North Malabar Nayars, however, the lower caste Marar drummers (who, like the barber for Tiyyars, conduct Nayar funeral rites) play a role suspiciously like secondary bridegrooms, since they place ornaments on the girl's arms and address her for the first time as a married woman, before the *tāli* is tied.

588 182 833 My hypothesis is that in all these cases the choice of *tāli*-tier indicates, on the part of men of the society, a general, unconscious fear of deflowering women. Barbosa (Stanley tr. 1866, p. 7) gives us a clue to this when he says that even after the *tāli*-rite, Nayar mothers went 'begging some young men to deflower the girl, for among themselves they hold it an unclean thing and almost a disgrace to deflower women'. Castenada (Kerr ed. 1911), similarly reports that in the Zamorin's family the girl's kindred 'send for a young man of the Nayar caste out of the kingdom, and give him presents to induce him to initiate the young virgin, after which he hangs a jewel round her neck. . . .' Even for the Zamorin's sisters, therefore, the 'initiator' 's role was unpopular: he must be induced with gifts to fulfil it. Hamilton (1727, p. 174) notes that the 'Nambourie or chief priest' must deflower the Zamorin's Nayar mistress (presumably at the *tāli*-rite) before the Zamorin could cohabit with her, and that 'some of the Nobles are so complaisant as to allow the Clergy the same Tribute'. That the Nambūdiris' privilege was not one exacted under protest from the Nayars, but willingly accorded, appears from his remark that 'the common people cannot have that compliment paid to them, but are forced to supply the Priest's place themselves'.

182 588 564 881 [842] [533] [789] The unwillingness to deflower a woman is explained on the grounds that it is a 'disgrace' and an 'unclean thing'. Here, evidently, is the clue to why the North Malabar Tiyyar *tāli* was tied by a barber woman, and the rites symbolizing defloration, or perhaps conferring fertility on the woman, performed by a barber man. Tiyyar barbers, like their washermen, pollute Tiyyars and may not ordinarily touch them. Both castes attend at the real first menstruation of a North Malabar Tiyyar girl, where the barber man and barber woman perform ceremonies similar to those of the mock menstrual seclusion before the *tāli*-rite. The Tiyyar washerwoman must at all times supply the girl with a lower cloth (*mattu*, 'change') in which to bathe on the fourth morning of menstruation. She supplies this cloth also for the bath after the mock seclusion before the *tāli*-rite. At the real puberty-rites, however, it is the headman of the washerman caste, and not a woman, who hands the clean loin-cloth on the third night to kinswomen of the girl, after singing a song designed to enhance her fertility.

564 881 182 842 [782] [533] The role of the washerman as a man associated with the fertility of women appears again in the first menstruation ceremony of South Malabar Nayars. Though the Nayar washerman washes ordinary cloths for Nayars, the lower caste, Tiyyar washermen (*Mannan*) provides the clean loin-cloth for bathing after menstruation and child-birth. At the Nayar puberty-rites, after the ceremonial bath on the fourth morning, the eldest washerman stands on the verandah and instructs the girl, who sits before him within the house, to make an offering with rice and coconuts to the sacred household lamp. While the natal kinsmen of the girl hide themselves on the back verandah (a place usually occupied by women) a group of washermen assemble on the front verandah and sing vulgar songs relating to sexual intercourse before the girl and her kinswomen, with a view to enhancing her fertility. At the end, her mother pays the head washerman the cloth which the girl has worn to cover her head and face.

Nayar
Tiyyar

pays the head washerman the cloth which the girl has worn to cover her head and face. 000

It seems that in this offering to the household lamp (as in the Tiyyar girl's offering to the 881
lamp and the marriage-pole in North Malabar, when she is instructed by the barber) the 588
washerman stands as a kind of bridegroom to the girl, as he does also by singing songs to
increase her fertility (see Freud 1919, ch. 3; Radcliffe-Brown 1939).[1] In some areas 564
of North Malabar the barber, too, sings songs at the *tāli*-rite to increase the fertility of the girl,
but I do not know whether these are obscene. In any case, both barber and washermen stand 533
in a special relation of intimacy to the girl during and immediately after her first menstrual 182
pollution, and the barber has the same role during the mock menstrual seclusion before the *tāli*-rite and at the rites representing ceremonial defloration which follow this seclusion.

Why, if it is in some circumstances a ritually polluting act, worthy of a low caste man, 588
symbolically to deflower a woman, do the Nayars and Kshattriyas call holy men of higher
caste, and the North Malabar Tiyyar barbers, a respected elder of their community, to tie a 783
woman's *tāli*? This becomes intelligible when we remember that ritual purity and pollution
are the positive and negative aspects of a condition best described as *sacer*, supernaturally 182
dangerous or valuable, the reverse of the profane.[2] In South India, a host of situations illustrate this dual nature of the 'sacred' as potentially polluting or potentially unusually pure. Thus faeces and urine are normally ritually polluting, yet the dung and urine of the sacred cow (a mother symbol) are eaten or sprinkled to purify oneself of the pollutions of death, of birth or of sin. The virgin, then, in these castes is sacred: it is ritually dangerous to
take her virginity. My hypothesis is that this is so because the virgin is unconsciously associ- 831
ated with the mother, as a woman whom it is desirable to approach sexually but who may 588
not be approached, because of the threat of castration or murder by a male parental figure
(originally the father and, in the matrilineal castes, the mother's brother). I think that this 783
is so because the virgin is still in the possession of her own jealous natal kinsmen, who own,
though they may not use, her sexuality. She is, therefore, feared by men of her own age-group, 182
who feel that it is the place of some father-figure (unconsciously, their own father or mother's brother) to take her virginity. A father-figure common to the whole society is therefore summoned, symbolically (and sometimes actually) to deflower the girl, release her, in respect of her sexuality, from the ownership of her natal kinsmen, and leave her, divorced on the fourth day, as a normal mature woman who 'may now do what she pleases'.

In the higher matrilineal castes the bridegroom has all the attributes of a father to the 588
Nayar community. When the *desavar* ties the *tāli*, he is a father-figure to the village as a 182
whole: in some villages he even has the title of *acchan* ('father'). The *nāduvari* is a father-
surrogate to the *desavaris*, and the king, to the *nāduvaris*. The Nambudiris are 'fathers' to the 564
whole Nayar and Kshattriya community, being the greatest landowners, the highest in ritual

---

[1] This impression of the washerman as symbolic bridegroom was strengthened by an incident in Palakkara. Five years previously, a Nayar girl of eleven in a family of newcomers had menstruated before her *tāli* was tied. Fearing neighbourly disapproval, her mother called the low caste washerman (Mannan)to the house and paid him to tie the girl's *tāli*, on the third day while she was still in menstrual pollution. He then brought the loin-cloth for the ceremonial bathing as usual on the fourth day, and performed the normal ceremonies, which were attended without unfavourable comment by other Nayars of the village. The girl's elder sister explained that, having failed to obtain a Nayar 'bridegroom' before the menstruation, or to tie the *tāli* herself before a temple god, the mother acted correctly in calling the washerman during pollution, thus saving her daughter from the danger of ostracism by the caste.

[2] The employment of a kinswoman of the bridegroom to perform all or part of the marriage rites on his behalf is common in the 'real' marriage ceremonies of many Hindu castes. A Tamil Brahman bridegroom only half ties his wife's *tāli*; his sister stands behind the girl to tie the second half of the knot. Among Travancore Tiyyars, the bridegroom's sisters and mother go to the bride's house without him for the real post-puberty marriage, where the sister recites the formulae on his behalf and later brings home the bride. Sociologically, the part played by a man's kinswoman in his marriage reflects, no doubt, their own interest in the marriage and rights in the bride. But in all the instances we may, from a psychological point of view, interpret the bridegroom's withdrawal in favour of a kinswoman as evidence of his fear to marry, a fear originally engendered by his Oedipal wishes and dread of paternal vengeance. Alternatively, the bridegroom's unconscious fear of his older kinsmen's vengeance may be got over in the reverse manner by requiring these elders to absent themselves from the marriage-rite, as in the *sambandham* ceremonies of North Malabar Nayars.

Nayar
Tiyyar

588 rank, above the political system of the kingdom, and, in religious belief, the representatives
182 of God on earth. All of these father-figures are collectively physiological fathers of the Nayars,
564 so that in summoning them to deflower their women the Nayars call in real or classificatory
fathers as well. When the bridegroom is a higher caste man, moreover (as when Tiyyar barbers
call an elder of their caste), his venerable age leaves no doubt of his paternal role.

That the ritual bridegroom should be a father-figure to the community explains my informants' memory that the Asan might deflower Nayar women, but might prefer to forgo his right for money paid by some other bridegroom. It explains why the *desavari* must be present to give permission for the Nayar rite (and the Tandan for the Tiyyar rite) and receive money 'as if to recompense him'. The preliminary gifts by the high-caste Nayar girl's family to Nambûdiri landlords, the *nâduvari* and the Maharaja also bear out this hypothesis.

588 Among South Malabar retainer-Nayars and among Tiyyars a high-caste father-surro-
gate could not be obtained, so that 'they must perforce supply the priest's place themselves'.
184 The retainer-Nayars get round this by selecting an *enangan* to represent the whole caste,
who was deputed for the task by village elders and, supernaturally, by the position of the
182 stars at his birth. Even so, the hazardous nature of the rite is indicated by the need to perform
787 it at an auspicious time, when the astrologer (in some respects another father-figure since,
though of lower caste, he was traditionally the trainer of Nayar boys in their village gymnasium, and a priest of Bhagavadi) gave the word.

588 Among North Malabar Tiyyars the mother's brother's wife or the father's sister might
tie the *tâli*. She does this on behalf of her son, who is the proper husband for the girl, and before
604 the marriage-pole and the sacred household lamp (divine phallic symbols). In this caste
184 it is fitting that some kinsman or kinswoman of the bridegroom should perform the rite, because
Tiyyars are not polyandrous and a girl becomes temporarily incorporated at marriage into
182 her husband's dwelling group. Yet, if we assume the Oedipal fear, the Tiyyar bridegroom
could not tie the *tâli* himself, since he is (ideally and often) a cross-cousin. If he is the mother's brother's son, he takes the girl, in this group where paternal claims offset matrilineal, from her *kâranavan* and his own father, a terrifying situation in view of his unconscious Oedipal fears. If he is the father's nephew, he takes her from her father and his own *kâranavan*, an equally dangerous situation. The problem is surmounted by permitting the mother's brother's wife or the father's sister of the girl to 'marry' her on behalf of her son.

564 The substitution of the barber-woman to tie the *tâli*, and the role of the barber as one
intimately associated with the girl's passage to womanhood, may perhaps be understood
[588] by considering the general role of barbers in Tiyyar social life. The barbers cut hair for
[305] Tiyyars, and in South Malabar though not commonly in the north, their women are mid-
wives. They rank parallel to the Tiyyar washerman with whom they are compared, since
[759] both castes have polluting occupations but take part in the rites of birth, girls' puberty, and
death. In North Malabar Tiyyar men may marry barber women hypergamously, their
[582] children being barbers by matrilineal descent. Barbers are thus socially and sometimes
physiologically the 'sons' of Tiyyars. They are also likened by the Tiyyars to their younger
brothers. Barbers may not give food to Tiyyars but must attend Tiyyar feasts, when they
sit on the left or 'younger' side of the feasting hall, the Tiyyars sitting on the right or 'older'
[693] side. Barbers address Tiyyar men as 'elder brother', but Tiyyars address older barber men by
name, as they do juniors of their own caste. Despite his low rank, however, the barber is in
[584] some situations a paternal figure for Tiyyars. He assists the Tandan in his executive functions
and may summon Tiyyar offenders to caste justice. An elderly barber is often a marriage-
[793] broker for Tiyyars, but he is primarily a priest for Tiyyar household rites. At a Tiyyar death
he instructs the heirs to make offerings to the spirit, in the form of a mud image which he
[782] makes. On the fourteenth day, he purifies the household by anointing its members with oil
[783]

Nayar
Tiyyar

and the five products of the cow. This ends their pollution and also the prohibition on using oil for cooking and bathing during the pollution period. The ability of a low caste man to purify a family from pollution (when in other contexts he is less pure than they) is an anomalous situation common in South India which has not so far been explained in sociological terms. It is paralleled by the fact that the washerman's purifying cloth is used by a woman to bathe in after menstruation; the washerman must also supply a similar purifying cloth for Nayars and Tiyyars to stand on when they are being purified by cow's excrements from the pollution of death. In some contexts, the Nayars recognize this anomaly, and thus employ two priests for death-rites, the lower caste funeral priest for ties during pollution, and the Elayad, a low sub-caste of Nambūdiris ranking above Nayars, to purify them and instruct them in final rites to the spirit. The Elayad also consecrates the South Malabar Nayar *tāli*, so that the Tiyyar barber may be compared to him as a functionary in the *tāli*-rite. In addition, the barber acts as a priest in Tiyyar family shrines in North Malabar dedicated to Bhagavadi and to ancestors. Finally, as barber, he performs the ceremonial hair-cutting of a Tiyyar boy at the age of three, and the ceremonial shaving of a Tiyyar man at a funeral and before other ritual occasions, including the *tāli*-rite of his nieces and daughters.

564
783
[841]
[793]
564
[588]
[793]
[852]

I suggest that the barber, both as a polluting 'younger' person and as a holy one who can conduct Tiyyar ceremonies and purify them from pollution, is both a son-surrogate and a father-surrogate for Tiyyars. His association in death-ceremonies with the spirits of Tiyyar leads me to suspect that he is identified with the ancestors, who, in psycho-analytic terms, collectively represent the father.[1] In this role the barber would resemble the washerman, his 'twin' in the caste-hierarchy, who in masked dances impersonates the dead ancestors and local heroes of both Nayars and Tiyyars in North Malabar and of Tiyyars in the south, and, while possessed by them, declares their will to the *taravād*. We have seen that the washerman, like the barber, may be viewed as a proxy bridegroom to the Tiyyar or Nayar girl in the puberty rites where he instructs her to perform offerings to the lamp as a phallic symbol and sings lewd songs to enhance her fertility.

[764]
564
182

The barber is also, however (because of hypergamous Tiyyar-barber marriages), a son-figure, and in general caste-terms a junior to the Tiyyar. In this role his ability to act as a kind of bridegroom at the *tāli*-rite reminds us of the practice of South Malabar Tiyyars, who select a small boy of an affine *taravād* as proxy bridegroom in the rite. Until about the age of eight, a boy may touch mature women of his own or another lineage. The fact that the small bridegroom is carried into the marriage-shed in the arms of his maternal uncle renders harmless his 'marriage' to the bride: he is a child, brought by a father-figure who adjures him to perform the rite. This fits my hypothesis that the immature girl in these castes is unconsciously likened to the mother: only a father-figure, an infant, or some generalized 'polluted' yet 'holy' figure may approach her with impunity.

564
588
182

My hypothesis that the virgin is unconsciously associated with the mother as a forbidden sexual object rests partly on the fact that in these rites the girl is brought into association with Bhagavadi, the mother-goddess of Nayars and Tiyyars. A branch of her milk-tree is set

588
831
182
776
[326]
[564]

---

[1] A psychoanalyst might probably see in the barber's other roles that of father-surrogate. Hair-cutting and shaving are in many parts of the world likened to castration or to a weakening of sexual power. Among Tiyyars they are ceremonially performed for boys at the age of three to five, and for men immediately after a death in the family. The ceremonial head-shaving of a boy (like the ceremonial ear-boring by the goldsmith, another low-caste functionary) is believed to reduce his *sakthi* (strength) and render him immune to the evil eye of the envious or to attacks from ghosts. It is possible to argue that the rite is a symbolic castration, performed to protect the child, in phantasy, from the danger of real castration at the hands of his jealous father, whose form is projected in the evil eye and in ghosts who attack small children. After a death, the ritual shaving of the heir is part of a complex of rites to ward off the vengeful anger of the spirit. It goes along with abstention from intercourse and from sexually stimulating foods, and the carrying of a knife (phallic talisman?) by the heir to ward off the murderous attack of the spirit. I associate head-shaving, like sexual abstinence, with symbolic castration of the mourner to avert the castrating and murderous wrath of the deceased whom, in his unconscious mind, the mourner himself has murdered.

Nayar
Tiyyar

796 language women whom they meet. At the temple they are received by young Nayar girls who
831 sell to them a mixture of yellow turmeric powder, blessed by *mantras*, and receive in return a
volley of sexual abuse. Thousands of cocks are sacrificed in the temple yard by the pilgrims
78 as an offering to Bhagavadi who is believed to drink their blood. Hundreds of Nayar, Tiyyar,
and Mannan Bhagavadi oracles from all over Malabar prance wildly in the temple courtyard
in their red cloths and waist-bands of bells, madly chopping their foreheads till blood flows
copiously. In the evening, at a sign from the *adduvari* of Kodungalur, the chief of the Mukkuvans
(a low fishing caste of the same culture as Tiyyars) begins the work of polluting the
actual shrine by rushing up to it and beating the outer wall with his stick. According to
Fawcett (1901 p. 245), he formally entered the shrine and defecated on the idol. The crowd
of Nayar and low caste men then hurtle, shouting foul abuse, round the shrine, beat on its
walls, and fling gold and filth into its interior. The festival ends at dusk when they return
quietly home. The next day, the Bharani day itself, the temple is locked and deserted in
fear, since it is believed that for seven days following, the foul demon attendants of the
goddess are given over to depredations of the shrine and of the idol itself. On the seventh day,
its priests reopen the temple, ritually purify it, and restore it to normal high caste worship
again.[1]

796 This attack on the goddess by low caste men who may not normally approach her
represents, it seems likely, a sexual attack on the mother by son-figures to whom she is normally
831 denied. In it the high caste priests (fathers) vacate the temple; the rules of purity and
78 pollution are reversed; animal sacrifice is indulged in; women and the goddess are insulted
in a manner contrary to everyday etiquette; and the Bhagavadi idol formally made the
182 object of an anal attack. The ceremony appears to act out cathartically the incestuous phantasies
of Nayar and low caste men towards their mother, and incidentally, in their obscene
attack on the Nayar girls, the repressed desires of low caste men towards forbidden women
564 of the higher castes. I suggest that in the singing of obscene songs by the washermen at a
Nayar or Tiyyar puberty ceremony, and the use of the barber as a kind of proxy bridegroom
588 at the North Malabar Tiyyar *tāli*-rite, these low caste men act out similar phantasies towards
881 higher-caste mother-figures, as well as providing the higher castes with harmless 'polluted'
182 bridegrooms who perform the necessary but dangerous tasks associated with bringing their
girls to womanhood.

831 Why should the Oedipal fear in these castes be so excessively strong that it is necessary
ceremonially to renounce the rights in the sexuality of a natal kinswoman before her puberty,
182 yet at the same time dangerous to be the first to receive these rights? I suggest that this is so
because of the great power accorded to elders in these castes, made possible by the joint
831 ownership of property by the lineage-segment under the legal headship of its senior man.
613 These property-arrangements perpetuate, often until middle age, male economic and emotional
dependence on the parental generation, and enforce the attitudes of reverence and
564 masochistic submission to elders which so characterize the higher Hindu castes. This dependence
on the parental generation causes male incestuous wishes to remain primarily fixed
423 on the mother, and secondarily on other close natal kinswomen throughout life, and perpetuates
the corresponding unconscious fear of male parental vengeance. It is, therefore,
593 in male phantasy, both necessary to give away the sexual rights in natal kinswomen (who are
identified with the mother as desirable but forbidden sexual objects) before they are in
danger of becoming mature, yet at the same time dangerous to deflower the virgins of other
lineages who, being still 'owned' by their own natal kinsmen, are also unconsciously likened
To the mother.

---

[1] I saw this festival in 1949. For fuller accounts see Thurston & Rangachari, (1909, V, pp. 400–05) and K. P. Padmanbaha Menon (1933, IV, pp. 333–43).

with high and noble peaks. These shut the Nāyar country entirely out of the rest of India and have helped to a very great extent to preserve the peculiar customs of marriage and relationships of Malabar. The monsoon which these Ghats receive makes Malabar the most picturesque part of India, an ever green country with lofty trees, luxuriant vegetation, noble rivers and magnificent lakes. There is nowhere a place which so much approximates to the description of 13

> "Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,
> Breadths of tropic shade and cluster knots of paradise;
> Droops the heavy blossomed bower, hangs the heavy fruited tree,
> Summer isles of Eden lying in the purple sphere of sea."

The extreme fertility of the valley and the rich tropical luxuriance of the forest have made life extremely easy, which even the importation of machines, mills, and factories has not been able entirely to change. Malabar is to a great extent, therefore, a land of idleness, and I may say of intellectual culture, for nowhere is learning, art, and poetry so much esteemed as among the Nampudiris and Nāyars of Malabar. 181

There are various reasons to believe that the Nāyars were very early comers in this place.[1] That they were not the aboriginal inhabitants of the place is evident from the fact that all over Malabar, from Mangalore to Cape Camorin, Nāyar families possess agricultural serfs who are distinctly of the negroid type. The Nāyars are a Dravidian race whose culture has only been superficially influenced by the Aryan immigration; of this more later. 174 101 [566]

The other communities of Malabar among whom the Nāyars live, are the Nampudiris, the Tiyas and the Pulayas. The Nampudiris are Brahmin landlords whose intercourse with and influence on the Nāyars we shall have to consider in detail later. A few families of Kshatriyas form the petty royalty of Malabar. The Tiyas are toddy drawers, people who are free men in theory but still show traces of serfdom in their relation with Nāyars, living as their tenants and doing their work for them. And the Pulayas, who till lately were slaves on whom was built up the agricultural life of the country. There are innumerable minor tribes, but they are small communities differentiated on the basis of their profession, like the Kanyans (astrologers), Asaris (carpenters), etc. 101 564 ● [566] [567] [463]

In this order Nāyars come next to the Brahmins and Kshatriyas and have precedence over all other castes. They are considered generally as a Dravidian variety of the Aryan Kshatriyas, which is, however, absolutely spurious in theory and is true only in so far as their *de facto* position is concerned. Any way, they form the feudal aristocracy of Malabar. Burke on a famous occasion classed them with 564

---

[1] See note at the end of the essay, on "The Origin of the Word Nāyars," Appendix. Note 1.

564 the Mamalukes of Egypt.[1] Camoens, the Milton of Portugal, described them in these lines :—

> " By the proud Nāyars noble rank is claimed ;
> The toils of culture and of art they scorn,
> The shining falchion brandished in the right,
> Their left arm wields the target in the fight."

175 564 As a matter of fact, the Nāyars as a military aristocracy have been famous ever since Marco Polo travelled in Asia.

701 " In this region of Malabar," says Gaspar Correa, writing on the three voyages of da Gama,[2] " the race of Gentlemen is called Nairs who are people of war. They are people who are very refined in blood and customs and separated from all other people. So much do they value themselves that no one of them ever turned a Moor."

" Of these Malabars there are two manner of people (the one is) Noblemen called Nāyars which are soldiers and do only weare and handle arms and the other is the common people called Polayas. The Nayros must [in all places] where they go or stand weare such arms as are appointed for them and alwaies be ready at the King's commandement. . . . . .

" As these Nayros go in the streets they cry po ! po ! which is to say take heed I come, stand out of the way."[3]

175 459 Historical circumstances have also had their share in the abundance of material which foreigners have left with regard to the Nāyars. Malabar was the seat of Arabic trade, and the Portuguese first landed at Calicut. During the hundred and fifty years of Portuguese power in India they had dealings mostly with the Zamorin of Calicut, the Rajah of Cochin, and the Deva Narayans, Rajah of Prakaud. That was the land from which spices came, and the Portuguese, therefore, were interested in the petty politics of these principalities. The Dutch, who followed then, also had their main interest on the mainland of India centred on Cochin, and in the first beginnings of English commerce, also, Malabar had a share. Apart from these a number of observant travellers has visited the seaboard of Malabar.

129 114 But though material of a kind is, therefore, abundant, it is found on closer examination to be unscientific and unreliable. The Nāyar Society of the eighteenth century, or an age previous to that, cannot be reconstructed from the observations of either Duarte Barbosa or Vinschar. An accurate and scientific description of the state of society prevalent before European contact is possible only after a thorough and searching study of Nāyar literature. Camoens' description of the Nāyars as scorning the toils of culture is not true. Malayalam has an extensive

---

113 [1] Had they (the French aristocracy) been like the Mamalukes of Egypt or Nāyars of the coast of Malabar. (*French Revolution*, p. 148, World's Classics.)

[2] *Voyages of Vasco da Gama*, Hakluyt Soc., vol. I, p. 185.

[3] *Voyage of Linschoten to the East Indies*, translation of 1598. Edited by Hakluyt Soc., vol. i, p. 278 *et seq.*

8:Panikkar I-4,5 (no date) 1918 AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

Malayalam has an extensive 127
literature, and it has been developed almost entirely by the Nampūdiris and the 114
Nāyars. The following essay is based on an examination of eighteenth-century [538]
literature. As far as it treats of present customs and ceremonies it is based on the personal experience and observations of the writer.

II.—THE VILLAGE ORGANIZATION OF THE NĀYARS.

A clear understanding of the life and customs of the Nāyars is impossible without 621
an adequate idea of the strength of their village organization. In this connection it is necessary to make an important distinction at the very start. The village organization in Malabar is utterly unlike the village communities in British India, and therefore should not be confused with them.[1] Malabar has no *village community*: it has only a village *organization*. To make the distinction clearer: in British India, in general, there are communities grouped together in a village, generally owning land in common and dealing with other villages as units. But in Malabar [421]
individual property, in the ordinary legal sense, is universal, and the village organization comes in only for specific purposes such as the management of the temple affairs and, in olden days, for military training and mobilization.

Another distinction is that the Malabar village organizations include only Nāyar 621
families, though in the same village there may be Christians, Ezhuvs, and Jews. 563
For purposes of communal life other castes are outside the village organization. 564
All these castes, except the Parayas, the Pulayas, and all those who were, till the abolition of slavery, in bondage to their masters, live side by side. Another point to remember in this connection is that Malabar villages are not like British Indian villages, built according to a plan. Each house in a Malabar village stands apart [361]
in a separate compound and in each compound generally there is a house. It might happen that the compound nearest a Nāyar's house is occupied by a Christian. But as far as the village organization is concerned the non-Nāyars do not exist.

Malabar in olden days was divided into ten or twelve states, each of which 631
was ruled by a Rajah. These states were divided into *Nads* (countries); each of these *Nads* consisted of certain *Dēsams*; and the *Dēsams* were subdivided into *Amsas*. Later administrative division has abolished the first two to a great extent, though they survive in popular speech and in poetic language. But the *Amsas*, or villages, are wholly intact even now; indeed they form the unit of administration. Before 634
the British conquest and the division of Nāyar country into three parts, British Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore, Nāyar society was built up on a feudal basis. Each of the *Nads* was under the control of a local magnate called *Nadu Vazhi* (the ruler of the *Nad*). He had criminal and civil jurisdiction and the right to claim

---

[1] Cf. Matthai, *Village Government in British India*. T. Fisher Unwin, 1915.

unless he has been admitted by certain formalities to the village to which he has 621
emigrated, is considered to belong to his original home.

The village is divided into two *Karas* (or *Amsams*), the northern *Kara* and the southern *Kara*. The division is arbitrary and has no significance. A man from Kavalam belonging to the North or South *Kara* is treated in another village as belonging to the same place.

The *Bhagavati* (goddess) Temple in the village was, before the government [346]
took possession of it, owned by *two Karas jointly*. 621

In each of the *Karas* there are five *Āsāns* or *Pramanis*. They keep *Kalaris* and 622
are honoured and respected by all the Nāyars in the district. No common Nāyar [874]
is allowed to sit in their presence, to enter their kitchen, or to call their women
without the title of *Kunjamma* (or Ladyship). [576]

The seventy-five families which the *Kara* contains are divided between the five *Āsāns*. Each *Āsān*, therefore, has a general authority over all the families, and special rights over the fifteen families immediately under his control.

In all matters of ceremony the *Āsāns* have to be informed beforehand. Without 622
their presence, no public ceremony of any family is supposed to be valid. All the [796]
public functions of the village are done by them. The ceremonies of the temple,
for example, are under their control. They are the people who summon the *Karakkars*,
or the villagers, to assemble and settle matters of importance. The villagers settle [623]
in such assemblies, things relating to the community, such as public festivals, the
expenditure of *Karayogam* (common to the village) funds and the behaviour of
people who have acted against the customs of the village. If a marriage ceremony 622
had not been properly conducted, it comes before them. If an *Āsān* had not been 585
properly invited, that matter also comes up for consideration. Instances of punish- 626
ments inflicted by the village on individuals and families were not uncommon till lately. I remember a particular case in which the villagers as a body led by their *Āsān* walked out of the marriage (*Talikettu*) *pandal* because the order of precedence was not kept up. The family of a squire had, during these hard days, become poor, and a rich squire who, in order of precedence, came below him was given a seat of honour. The result was that the whole community walked out as a protest, and the *Kalyanam* had to be held over again to the satisfaction of the poor *Āsān* and his loyal friends.

How strong this organisation is will be seen from the following incident. A 264
gentleman, when coming from Madras, had a Christian friend with him, and his 564
servant who waited for him at Alleppey was eating his food when both of them 626
entered the boat. It is a very rigid custom that no food can be taken in the company, or even in the proximity of any lower caste, and Christians are considered to be such. The result of it was that when they got home the news got abroad that the Nāyar servant had eaten with a Christian in the boat, and the whole village

264
626 was in a state of terrible fury. It was only with great trouble that they were per-
564 suaded not to excommunicate the poor man.

The Nāyar life and customs can be rightly understood only in the light of their
621 village organisation. The enormous influence the opinion of the village has in all
178 matters connected with their social, as well as their family, life is the main reason of the
persistence of the Nāyars as a vigorous and healthy community in spite of strong
economic pressure, merciless competition and fast changing conditions. It is also
due to this system of organised life that the customs of sexual relationship and
marriage, which look so loose and immoral on paper, are found actually to be decent
and tolerable. The Nāyar community is not more immoral than any other com-
munity in the world. The restraining influence among them does not come from
actual written law, as among the Hindus of other parts of India, or from a belief in
any social philosophy present in the mind of at least the leaders of thought. It
comes from the strong feeling of social propriety which the village has developed
to a very high degree.

III.—Family Life among the Nāyars.

613 The Nāyar family consists of all the descendants from the same ancestress,
counting relationship exclusively from the side of the mother. Theoretically it
[425] may contain all those who have a common ancestry of this kind, but, in practice,
when families grow unwieldy, they divide the common property and live under
different roofs. Ordinary families consist of relations four or five degrees removed.
The numerical strength of the family varies. In old and aristocratic families one
finds sometimes fifty to eighty people, though one or two families can
be mentioned in Malabar which contain one hundred and fifty to two hundred
people.

The undivided family generally lives under the same roof. In the house itself
only the females live, while the male members of the family occupy rooms set apart
for them, or, if they are rich, live in houses in neighbouring compounds. The Nāyar
351 house has always a large piece of enclosed ground in front of it, which is called
613 *Muttam*. Often it is used as an ornamental garden, and no man of the lower caste
may enter it. There the children walk about and play in daytime, and the women
have their dance and general merriment in the evening. Behind the house is a
vegetable garden and a bathing tank, which is reserved exclusively for women.
[562] The dominant idea in the arrangement of the house is the proper separation of sexes
in the family.

613 The family owns property in common. What a private individual earns
421 belongs to him exclusively, but when he dies it is joined to the rest of the family,
[178] according to the old Nāyar law which is still prevalent in some parts.[1] When the

---

[1] Legal tendency has been to modify this practice.

613 834 593 for young men to go and stay in their wives' houses and visit their own families for business arrangements.

613 [421] [584] [604] Authority in the family is wielded by the eldest member, who is called *kārnavan*. He has full control of the common property, and manages the income very much as he pleases. He arranges marriages (*sambandhams*) for the boys as well as the girls of the family. He had till lately full power (at least in practice) of alienating anything that belonged to them. His will was undisputed law. This is, perhaps, what is intended to be conveyed by the term *Matri-potestas* in communities of female descent. But it should be remembered that among the Nāyars the autocrat of the family is not the mother, but the mother's brother.

613 421 The power of the *Kārnavan* over the family property has always been, in theory, limited, because the property was supposed to belong to every member of the family jointly. Till lately, however, it was practically impossible to limit the *Kārnavan's* power of mortgaging or even fully alienating it, because when it came to litigation the *Kārnavan* always pleaded that such action as he took was necessary for the welfare of the family, and justified himself by basing his arguments "on the discretionary power" vested in him. However, the old theory has lately been asserted in law that a *Kārnavan* can sell or mortgage the property only with the consent of the other members of the family.

All the moneys owing to the family can be paid only through him. He alone can give permission for the use of what belongs to the family. He can punish all the members of the family, either by depriving them temporarily of their allowance, or by prohibiting them to enter the house. In short, he is virtually the head of a tribe rather than the senior member of a family.

613 604 829 *The Wife of the Kārnavan.*—The wife of the *Kārnavan* has no standing in the family; yet as is but natural, she is supposed to be a dark and sinister force working against the interests of the *Tharawad*. Since she does not belong to the *Tharawad* of her husband she has no interest in its well-being, and it is generally supposed that the *Ammāvi* (the wife of the maternal uncle) is interested only in getting as much out of her husband's family for her own children as her influence over her husband allows. All the tales told to children have as the villain the *Ammāvi*, whose position is not only that of the wife of the maternal uncle, but also the mother-in-law of the brother. She is universally considered to be a sort of sinister stepmother.

613 604 586 [564] But it must be acknowledged that the Nāyar *Kārnavan* loves his sister's children more than his own. The explanation of this apparently unnatural feeling lies in two directions. First, the father is not necessarily of the same caste as the son. Secondly, there is always the possibility of a break in the union. Divorce is not a matter of any difficulty among the Nāyars, both the husband and wife having equal right to announce such a termination of their connection whenever either of [593] the parties desires to do so. This instability of relationship is the principal reason

606 as *Ammari Amma*, the first word being the same as the wife of the mother's brother,
601 and the second an honorific addition to it. Dr. Rivers, in *Kinship and Social*
601 *Organisation*, as well as in *Melanesian Society*, has conclusively shown that wherever
606 first-cousin marriage prevails, there the mother-in-law has no special name. His
114 explanation that this is due to the obvious fact that, in most cases, the mother's
brother's wife is the same person as the mother-in-law, and that the former position
was antecedent to the latter, is fully borne out by the terminology among the Nāyars.

601 Another relation of importance in the Nāyar family life is the father's sister.
604 She has a special name and has a very special function to perform. In Middle Travancore she is called *Appachi*. Her importance varies according to the status of the father's family. If the father's family is one of greater importance than one's own, then the father's sister is a person to be consulted on various matters with regard to the child. In any case she should be the first to visit the new-born child. This is called "*Kannom Kalcha.*" In the marriage ceremony also she has a prominent place.

Enangar.—The whole of Nāyar family life used to be based, though this has
613 decayed of late, on the close relationship with one or more other families, spoken
621 of as *Enangar* or Allies. A *Tharawad* with its *Enangars* formed *a social group* rarely marrying outside its fold and generally arranging all festivities and ceremonies between themselves. Neither funeral rites, nor marriage ceremony, nor even any one of the hundred other minor things which go to make up the ordinary life of a Nāyar family, can take place without the co-operation, or at least the presence, of
564 a member from the *Enangar* or allied families. The *Enangar* families are always
264 of the same sub-caste, with a right to eat with you and enter any part of your house.

The *Enangar* system is evidently a kinship organisation, forming an inter-
613 marrying class. The question of its origin is a very difficult one. The prevalent opinion is that it originated in the days when Nāyars fought and farmed in alternate months, when a kinship organisation of some sort was very necessary for safety and success. This organisation has become very lax of late, though it cannot in any way be said to be dying out.

Marriage Restrictions.—The marriage restrictions prevalent among the Nāyars have nothing much peculiar from the rest of the Hindu society. The bride must always be younger than the man, and must in strict orthodoxy belong to the same generation as his. He may not marry his mother's sister's daughter, who is to him as his own sister. All his sisters, own and collateral, together with ladies of a previous generation in his family, form a legal incestuous group. A man has, therefore, to marry either entirely out of the circle of his relations, or from among his *cross-cousins*.

Cross-cousin marriage[1] is the orthodox custom. Your maternal uncle's

---

[1] By cross-cousins I mean children of brother and sister. The relationship is expressed by the word *Machuna*, which is, it should be noticed, the same as in the Toda language. Among

Malabar Brahmins

daughter never calls you by any name which, in the Hindu code of manners, is done 582 only with regard to the husband. She is your *a priori* wife, if such an expression could be used. She is spoken of as the *Mura Pennu* (*Mura* = customary, and *Pennu* = female or wife, meaning customary wife).

Unlike other Hindus a Nāyar may marry a girl from a lower sub-caste as long 582 as she also is a Nāyar. He cannot marry a woman whose caste is higher than his 564 own without the wife losing her caste. A Nāyar lady can choose her husband either from among the allied families or others, provided they are of the same or superior sub-caste. Also, she can marry from anyone of the higher castes, *i.e.*, either from the Brahmins or from the Kshatriyas. The alliance between the Malabar Brahmins and the Nāyars is a social fact of very great interest. In no other part of India is a Brahmin allowed to marry out of his own caste. In Malabar, on the other hand, among the Nambudiris or the Aryan immigrants, only the eldest member of the family can marry among the Brahmins, the others being forced to marry among the Nāyars. The permanence through ages of matrilineal descent among the Nāyars is due to this fact. The Brahmins, being of a superior caste, and the Nāyar wife of the Brahmin being unable to live in her husband's family, the system tended to be matrilineal as well as matrilocal. Also, since the children of such a marriage are Nāyars and not Brahmins, though the father is a Brahmin, the system remained wholly unilateral without any definite bilateral development. It is only the very highest among the Nāyars that have connection with the Brahmins. Through their influence the custom preserved all its strength in the lower classes as well.

The peculiar custom of the Malabar Brahmins of not allowing their junior 428 members to marry among their own caste introduces a complication into the Nāyar 564 system. The idea underlying such a prohibition is evidently the preservation of 582 the big estates which the Nampudiris own. Since the Nāyar sons of the Malabar Brahmins do not inherit anything from their fathers, their estates remain undivided and descend only to the eldest son. Primogeniture has been the custom in every country where the preservation of big landed property in the hands of a few was aimed at. The undivided family among the Nāyars is also meant to conserve their possession of the land and maintain the political influence resulting from it. A point of utmost importance which should always be kept in mind in this connection is the interaction of economic and social forces. The interest of the Nampudiris to keep their property undivided led to their custom of primogeniture, and this again induced them to use their temporal power and sacerdotal influence to perpetuate the matrilineal system among the Nāyars. Also, the desire to preserve the family estates as a whole, kept the Nāyar families from being divided, making thereby a change to patrilineal system altogether impossible.

---

the Todas also *Machuna* (or cross-cousin) marriage is the orthodox custom. See p. 512, Rivers, 582
The Todas. Also Appendix, "Similarities between the Nāyars and the Todas." 171

Nambudiri Brahman

588 182 174 cast off one husband and choose another, the religious rites of marriage had to be performed without any definite marital relationship with any particular man. This seems to be the explanation of *Talikettu Kalyanam.*

582 564 585 The real marriage *de jure* and *de facto* is the *Sambandham.* "*Sambandham*" is a Sanskrit word, meaning good and close union. A Nāyar girl can have *Sambandham* not only with a Nāyar man, but with Brahmins and Kshatriyas. As a matter of fact the whole system of Nāyar customs seems to have been regulated to suit the purpose of the Nampudiri Brahmins. It must be remembered that a very strict system of primogeniture is prevalent among the Nampudiris, and only the eldest male member in a Nampudiri family marries from among his own caste. Only in case the eldest has no issue, or is incapable of having any, is it that one of his brothers gets the chance to marry in his own community. Generally, therefore, the younger [554] sons of a Nampudiri family marry among the Nāyars. It must also be remembered that it is considered an honour reserved only for the highest Nāyar families to be allied to Nampudiri families by marriage.

585 The *Sambandham* customs are of the simplest nature. If the suitor is a Brahmin he goes and tells the *Kārnavan* of his desire to marry the girl. The *Kārnavan* then consults the astrologer for an auspicious date, and informs the village elders. The Brahmin brings some *Pudakas* (*i.e.*, clothes which the wife wears) and hands them over to the girl in the presence of her relations and the neighbours, and it is duly announced that they are married.

[582] If the suitor is a Nāyar he is generally the girl's father's sister's son. As we have said before, this is considered to be the most proper marriage. In this case it must be remembered the head of the suitor's family approaches the girl's uncle with a proposal that such marriage is eminently desirable, and the *Kārnavan* informs all the necessary people, and the *Pudaka* is given without much ceremony. It is when a stranger wants to marry in the family that all the formalities have to be gone through. Then all the village and all people in any way related are informed and, in the case of rich families, invited to a feast on the auspicious day. After an elaborate and sumptuous meal the village headman and family elders assemble in a hall. A lighted lamp is placed in the middle, and before it a plantain leaf with rice, betel-nut, lemons and spices. The bridegroom is ushered in here nearly half an hour before the ceremony, and he comes accompanied by some members of his family and the chief men of his village. There is a sort of social reunion for some time, and when the auspicious moment arrives, the bride, accompanied either by her mother (or, in some parts, by her mother's brother's wife) enters and approaches the bridegroom. In ordinary cases the bridegroom stands up and takes the clothes which some of his party had brought for him and gives them to the bride. In some cases the uncle of the bridegroom gives them to the mother of the girl.

The ceremony is now supposed to be over. The bride retires with her mother, and for some time a general conversazione, including sometimes recitals of odes,

vocal music, etc., goes on. One by one the guests soon depart, and the bridegroom 585
stays in his wife's house for a few days. It must be remembered that the Nāyars [591]
are a strictly matrilocal community, though the custom shows a laxity in these days. [198]

The *Sambandham* customs are not the same all over Malabar. They vary [184]
considerably in details, but the principle is the same all over. *Sambandham* in
itself, though recognised as legal, has not the binding effect of a proper marriage. [581]
It is in theory dissoluble at will, and often it happens that, due either to misunderstanding 586
or quarrel, either of the parties breaks off relations. In such a case, the
marriage is deemed to have ended, and the aggrieved party can, without further
formality, marry anybody else. The legal position is slightly altered in Travancore. [648]
By the Nāyar Regulation Act of 1912 it was enacted that if a man wants to break
off his marriage relations with a woman to whom he was united by a properly conducted
Sambandham he has to give her six months' notice and provide for the
maintenance of her children by him (till they attain their twelfth year, unless the
mother marries in the meantime). But this law has very little influence, and
marriages and divorces go on in the same free fashion as before. In British Malabar, 581
there is the Malabar Marriage Act of Sir C. Sankaran Nayar, the present Educational [648]
Member of the Imperial Government, by which a Nāyar entering into a *Sambandham*
with a Nāyar woman can, if the parties choose to do so, register their union as a
marriage to which ordinary marriage laws apply. This has been found very
ineffective, for in the last twenty years during which it has been in force only six
marriages have been registered, and all of them have been in the family of its
distinguished author.

Before such laws came to be enacted (and to a very great extent even now) 582
there has been singular freedom of marriage and divorce among the Nāyars. The
men that a girl could possibly marry were strictly restricted by certain conditions.
A Nāyar girl is not allowed to contract a marriage with men of a lower subcaste. [564]
She can marry either in her own subcaste or in castes above hers. She is not allowed
to marry one who is not at least two years older than herself. She cannot marry anyone
who shares pollution with her (that is descended from the same ancestress on the
maternal side, however remote). There are cases when the common ancestress
lived nearly four hundred years ago, but still her descendants are supposed to be so
closely related in blood as to preclude matrimonial relationship of any sort.

The husband visits the wife's house after dinner, and this does not cause any 591
particular inconvenience, as, till lately, marriage was restricted to people of one's [582]
own village or of its immediate neighbourhood. But in these days the tendency is [178]
strongly patrilocal, though ancient and aristocratic families still refuse to send their
ladies out of the house. To keep within one's own house is considered to be a
specially aristocratic privilege.

The question of polyandry among the Nāyars is a much debated point. This 595
can be said with certainty: there has been no authenticated case of it at least for
The last fifty years.

595 175 [609] [114] the last fifty years. All the evidence that we have of this custom among the Nāyars in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, are from foreign travellers who, it must be remembered, were not allowed to come within sixty yards of a Nāyar house. Their evidence, therefore, is an extremely unsatisfactory ground for dogmatising on Nāyar customs. 595 174 538 On the other hand, the extensive Malayalam literature of that period contains no single allusion to polyandry. The works of Kunchan Nambiar, whom it is no exaggeration whatever to compare to Molière, though he describes minutely the social life of the Nāyars of the early eighteenth century with its laxity of morals, redeemed only by chivalry of conduct, makes no mention whatever of polyandry. On the other hand, in a famous passage he makes the declaration: "It is against the laws of all castes for a woman to have four or five husbands."

Nalanchu barthavoru thikku thanatu
Nalu jatikkum Viddhichatallorkanam.

595 174 How far this statement is decisive it is difficult to say. But one thing seems to be clear from it, that the idea in itself was repugnant to the community as a whole, though individuals might have practised it here and there.[1]

V.—Birth and Funeral Ceremonies.

844 Among the Nāyars, as among all the people whose life is regulated by magico-religious customs, child-birth is an event of great and mysterious significance. Especially is this the case with regard to the first child. Therefore the ceremonies of nativity are of an intenser and more magical character during the time of the first pregnancy than during subsequent ones. Indeed, the mysterious nature of childbearing is entirely lost after the first time, and the ceremonies on subsequent occasions are only a few tabus, which are generally, in the phraseology of Van Genepp, "rites dynamistes directs et negatives."

843 613 The most important of the pre-natal ceremonies is *Pulicudi*,[2] or the drinking of the tamarind juice; and the customs relating it are as follows: On the appointed day all the *enangars* (people belonging to the same kingship organization) come to the house early in the morning, and the pregnant woman is taken out by one of them and bathed, after rubbing oil all over her. Then she is dressed for the occasion and, entering the house from the north, sits looking eastward. [564] [787] [604] [593] The astrologer, who being of a lower caste commonly stands in the outer courtyard, calculates the auspicious hour. He sends word when the time is come, and the *Ammāci* (the wife of the mother's brother, and mother-in-law by right of the brother) pours a few drops of tamarind juice in a small silver bowl. The brother or the uncle of the

---

[1] See Note 3, Appendix.

[114] [2] Dr. Rivers makes some obviously erroneous deductions based upon this word, for which see note on "The Similarities between Nāyars and the Todas," Appendix, Note 2.

852

themselves by bathing in the temple tank, come to the *Darsana* (the aspect towards 262
which the face of the image looks). There the priest brings the offering and the [783]
male member from either the father's family or the mother's own family takes a [782]
little of it on his pointing finger and gives it to the child. The child is supposed to
inherit the qualities of the person who gives it the sacred rice, an idea allied to the
superstition concerning godfather and godchild. There is, of course, a feast on the
day at the child's house.

“ Chaque société générale,” says M. Van Gennep, “ peut être considéré comme une 852
sorte de maison devisée en chambres et en couloirs. . . . Chez les demi-civilisés ces 561
compartiments sonts soigneusement isolés les unes des autres et pour passer de l'un
à l'autre des formalités et des cérémonies sont nécessaires.” This idea that in
semi-civilised societies stages of life are marked out with great precision so that the
passage from one to another necessitates ceremonies or “ rites de passage ” is appli-
cable only in a very limited sense in the case of the Nāyars. Among them such
ceremonies are few and very far between. The male children, after the *Churu Koda*, 561
or the rice-giving ceremony just now described, have only one other ceremony to
perform which is called *Sasty-Purty*, or the fullness of sixty years. Between his
sixth month and his sixtieth year a male member of the Nāyar Society has no *rites
de passage* to pass through. The *Sasty-Purty*, which takes place on his sixtieth birth- [886]
day, is a sort of jubilee, after which respectable people are supposed to retire from
worldly life. It is indeed a *rite de passage.*

Women have naturally more ceremonies than men. Apart from the *Talikettu* [881]
(described in the last chapter) a Nāyar woman has to pass through the ceremonies of [843]
Terundu Kuli (bathing after the first menses) and *Pulicudi* described above. After [886]
she has become a mother a woman can be said to be free from all ceremonies till
her sixtieth year, when, after a *Sasty-Purty*, she also retires from active life.

The Nāyar funeral ceremonies are of a very complex nature. They show a 764
great deal of Hindu ideas about soul and re-birth mixed with purely Nāyar beliefs [177]
about *Pretrams*, ghosts, etc., etc. It is important, in this connection, to notice at the
very start that the Nāyars make a clear distinction between the ceremonies per-
formed at the death of the eldest member of the family and those at the death of
others. The following is the procedure generally adopted at the death of a Nāyar.
As soon as a person dies he is bathed and clad in white, and laid on a bed made of
long plantain leaves. If it is the eldest male or female member of the family that 764
is dead, then all their relations on the matrilineal side present new cotton cloths, with 766
which the corpse is covered and tied before it is taken to be burnt. Only the eldest
members are burnt ; others are buried. Apart from the greater importance attached
to the death of the eldest members, the ordinary funeral rites are in essentials the
same.

The presence of the *Māran* (a particular caste among the Nāyars who perform 764
the lesser priestly functions) is absolutely necessary on the occasion. He is sent for as 564

764 [564] soon as death has taken place in a house, and on his arrival undertakes the general management of the ceremonies.

After the corpse is tied and laid on the plantain leaves, a ceremony called *Para Nirathuka* takes place. (*Para* is a measure of paddy, and *Nirathuka* means to place in line.) A coconut-oil lamp is lit and placed at the head of the corpse and immediately in front of it are placed three *paras* of rice. The significance of this ceremony is unknown to me.

766 *Ceremonies of Cremation.*—If the deceased is the eldest of a family the body is now cremated. A pyre is made of mango wood, and the corpse is placed with its head towards the south (the god of death, according to the Hindu mythology, resides in the south), and then covered with fuel. The nephew or younger brother lights the fire. Then all the members of the family and all others who have been polluted by contact with them go and bathe in the tank. During the process of burning there is a process called *Kumba pradikshanam*—which is manifestly an Aryan custom (*Kumbham* and *Pradikshanam* are two Sanskrit words: the first means a pot, and the second means to walk round). The ceremony, as its name implies, consists of walking round the pyre with a pitcher, the bottom of which is pierced. One of the family fills this pitcher with water and carries it three times round the burning corpse, dashing it on the ground at the end.

765 Two or three members of the family continue to perform funeral rites for the next fourteen days. As I have not taken part in it I do not possess first-hand knowledge.

765 783 [564] For all the fourteen days, all the members of the family are under pollution. The pollution, in the case of death, is very strong. All the members of the family are untouchable, and any Nāyar who touches them must purify himself by a bath. On the fourteenth day is the purificatory ceremony. The *Mārān* comes in the morning and gives everyone some oil. After smearing the body with these everyone goes and bathes, and comes back clad in white. The *Mārān* then sprinkles holy water, and a Brahmin priest purifies the house. There is generally a big feast for two days.

765 526 The feast on the fifteenth day is accompanied by some sports. All the men of the neighbouring villages come for it, and there is great *tamasha*. How far this could be identified with funeral sports elsewhere it is hard to say.

785 782 765 [527] After these feastings one of the family undertakes a *Diksha* (which means a vow) for forty-one[1] days or a whole year. During this time, the man who undertakes the *Diksha* lives apart with a Brahmin. He is not allowed to talk to or see a woman. He must not cut his hair or his nails. He must bathe twice a day in the river, or in the tank, and lead a pure and pious life. If it is only for forty-one days, there is not much feasting at the end of it. If it goes on for a full year, there is a huge celebration,

---

[1] All ordinary vows are taken for forty-one days. If you want to placate a deity you pray to him for forty-one days. If you want to make a big sacrifice it extends to forty-one days, etc.

291 184 richer classes go in for Benares silk. This is wound round the loins and extends to the feet. The upper part of the body is seldom covered by the commoner folk, though most of them carry a second piece of cloth with them. Among the titled classes of the Nāyars it is customary to put on a long piece of laced muslin on the upper part of their body.

Mostly the Nāyars go barefoot, though expensive and elaborately-made sandals are used by the richer classes.

824 302 *Scents, Flowers, etc.*—The Nāyars use a lot of scented things. Sandal-wood paste, which has a beautiful aroma, is generally used on various parts of the body. Musk is also used, generally by ladies. Jasmine is the favourite flower. It is worn in clusters by women in their hair. It is very difficult to find an old Nāyar house which has not got a jasmine plant in its garden. Its scent is delightful, and when strung together as a garland it makes the most delightful, as well as the most welcome, present to a lady. Jasmine is also strewn in the bridal bed.

415 412 326 *Household Utensils.*—Household utensils, plates, pots, etc., are mostly made of bronze. Very few Nāyar families have got what is spoken of as household silver. The material they use is generally made with great taste, but the praise for this does not belong to them. The workers in bronze are hereditary craftsmen. Their life is devoted to designing and making these things, and naturally they have acquired great efficiency in it. The only praise that the Nāyars deserve for using them lies in the fact that, in spite of a strong temptation to go in for aluminium ware, which is much cheaper, they persist in using the costly, but better made and more artistic bronze things.

121 178 What is the future of this people? Will they become patrilineal and merge into the vast ocean of Hindu population, or will they remain matrilineal, while adjusting their social relationships and economic organisations to suit the changing conditions of life in India? Will they break up their *Tharawad* (the joint family) and abandon the primitive system of classificatory relationship? These are questions difficult to answer, but some new tendencies may here be noticed.

178 611 One thing I must say to start with. There is no chance of the system of matriliny undergoing any fundamental change in Malabar. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, the economic interest is too large to submit to any change in the order of things dictated by purely theoretical reasons. Even if we could establish that the patrilineal system of life is superior to the matrilineal, the change from the latter to the former would not take place in Malabar, because it would mean a social revolution of some magnitude. Secondly, as long as there is the Brahmin marriage system it is not only the Nāyars that are interested in its upkeep, but also the Nampudiris.

178 564 Another reason is this. There is in Malabar what may be called a strong caste war. There is first of all the Nampudiri class, mostly landlords with great social and religious influence. Their rivalry is not of great importance. There are, then, the Nāyars. Thirdly, we have the Syrian Christians, who are an extremely intelli-

178
564

gent, persevering, and prosperous community. Fourthly, there are the foreign Brahmins, who are chiefly usurers, making money by lending at a fabulous high rate of interest and buying up property. Now, the *Tharawad* (or the joint undivided family) system gives the Nāyars a great advantage. Their capital is strategically massed, so to say, and while the property of a family is joined together its credit is much more than it would be if it were divided between the various members. Intelligent Nāyars see the advantage of this position, and are loth to break up what is most certainly an effective economic organisation.

178
613
434

178

The tendencies of change that are visible are mainly the following:

591

There is, first of all, a distinct process of change from the *matrilocal* to the *patrilocal* system. This is at present confined to a few of the English-educated families. The officials and those in learned professions have their wives and children staying with them, and this has most certainly set up a new current of opinion. The tendency among these people has been to change the matrilocal matriliny into patrilocal. The older families still look with disapproval on this, and it has not progressed very much, except among a few ultra-moderns. Even in orthodox families the women were allowed for a few months every year to go and stay with their husband's people. Now, by the Nāyar Regulation Act (1912) of Travancore, the husband is given the right to demand that his wife should come and stay with him. Of course, it is open to the *Karnavan* to prohibit this, but in such a case the husband can divorce his wife immediately. Therefore we may safely predict a definite change to a patrilocal system among the English-educated classes of Nāyars.

178
611

But whether this would contribute towards a change from matrilineal to patrilineal system is a question more difficult to answer. On the whole I am inclined to answer it in the negative. But for the economic competition of other communities, the Nāyars would certainly have partitioned their estates and started on a patrilineal existence. But now it is too late. The economic interest involved is so vast, the number of people to be affected by it so great, the change in itself so revolutionary, that it is, for a long time at least, beyond the scope of either legislative or administrative action. It would, indeed, be very interesting to watch the line of evolution which such a community, placed as it is between the close and powerful oligarchy of the Nampudiri Brahmins, and the no less powerful and at present unquestionably more aggressive Syrian Christians, would take. The next quarter of a century will probably solve the problem. What the solution will be it is impossible for us to say; that it will not for a long long time, at least, be real patriliny, I can prophesy; the rest time alone can answer.

APPENDIX.

Note No. 1.—The Origin of the word "Nāyars."

101

There are many reasons to believe that the term Nāyar is a corrupted form of the word *Nagar* or "serpent-men." The generally accepted derivation of the word

[P. 1]

CHAPTER I.

—:o:—

THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

—:o:—

A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS).

Introduction.

THE NAYARS are an interesting caste of people, forming a 101 considerable portion of the population of the 564 Cochin State; they constitute the third and last of the honoured castes under the name of the pure "*Sudras of Malayala*". They were mostly nobles who engaged [554] neither in handicraft, nor in commerce, nor in any other occupation but that of arms, which they always carried; and no one could be called a Nayar who was not of noble lineage. They were in fact the magnates of the rulers of Kerala, and exercised as much authority over their inferiors as their rulers did over them. They formed in ancient times a warlike race with military leaders and civil administrators of all kinds. Very much [177] influenced as they are by modern civilisation, their customs widely differ from those of other people, in marriage, family and social organizations, as also in maternal filiation. These customs, which are primitive, are being tenaciously retained by them; and they are even now, as they have always been, a [178] unique people whose customs may appear peculiarly strange to foreigners.

The word *Nayar*, which is the honourific plural of *Nayan*, is derived from *Nayaka*, which means a leader of the people; and the name, which in the widest sense at present includes a large number of sub-castes quite distinct from one another, may have been given by a class of Brahmans called the Nambuthiris [1] to the Nayars proper, who formed a military class in ancient times. Some consider it to be more correct to derive *Nayars* from *Nagas* (snakes or snake-worshipping Nagas or Scythians) from the worship of the Nagas or snakes which has been the characteristic cult of the community.

---

[1] See account of the Nambuthiris.

Origin and tradition of the caste.

101 564 [173] According to *Kerala Mahatmyam*, the Nayars are said to be the descendants of the union of the junior members of the Nambuthiri families with the Devagandarva and Rakshasa women brought in by Parasurama from extra-terrestrial regions. The *Keralotpatti* regards them as the descendants of the Sudras who accompanied the Brahman immigrants from outside Kerala.

101 564 174 Some consider that the Nayars came from Tibet where polyandry prevails, while others consider them to be a very early division of the Newars of Nepal. The mere existence of polyandry in Tibet is not sufficient to suggest a racial identity, nor is the form of polyandry prevailing amongst the Nayars the same as that found amongst the Tibetans;[1] but the marital relations, mode of inheritance and other customs, as well as the style of architecture of Nepal, closely connect them with the Nayars, and go to show a common origin.[2]

101 174 In the serpent worship of the Nayars, and also their matriarchal customs, others have found traces of a Scythian origin. It is said that the Dravidian languages retain a more intimate connection with the Scythian or Turanean tongues. Philology also comes in to support this view. It is said that Tamil and its cognate tongues were founded upon the ancient Asura or Dravidian speech, and this is strongly confirmed by the fact that the language of the Brahuis, a tribe on the borders of Sind, has been found to be closely allied to them. "The Brahuis' language", says Dr. Caldwell, "enables us to trace the Dravidian race to the southern confines of Central Asia, and that this country was the home of the Nagas to which race apparently belonged the founders of the Dravidian kingdoms." It may therefore be safely concluded that the Dravidians of South India were of the same stock as the Nagas of the North, and to these tribes of Naga colonists belonged the original serpent worshipping Nayars.[3] "The name Dravidian Races," says Friedrich Ratzel, "fits only the Tamils, Telugus, and Canarese of Southern India, remoter kindred of the dark aboriginal population to whom Aryan population brought the religion of Brahma, a high civil order and of course the opportunity of extensive intermixture. The selection of the term is connected

---

[1] The Evolution of Marriage, Letourneau, page 80.

[2] The Sun and the Serpent, C. F. Oldham, page 158.

[3] The Sun and the Serpent, Chapter VII, pages 162-165.

361 The Nayars, like other Malayali Hindus, are not lovers
564 Habitations. of towns, but generally live in detached
houses, with large compounds and good
gardens. The strict customs of caste purity and impurity in
former times made them desert places where they were liable
to be polluted by the members of very low castes. They
generally select the site of a house either on the margin of
a fertile valley or ravine with bright green fields of rice in
35/ front. The entrance to their compounds, which are often somewhat
raised off the ground by laterite or mud walls, is at some
little distance from the main house, and consists of a door in
the centre of a strong gate-way, which is the first that attracts
one's attention as the dwelling is approached. The gate is quaintly
constructed, and the surroundings are exceptionally neat and
417 tidy. It is also essential that a stair or a ladder should lead
up to it from the bank of a green level paddy flat, reminding
one of the days when security of life and property
depended upon one's own ability to laugh a seige to scorn;
when a Nayar house was his castle, and when at the gate-way
were posted retainers to keep watch and ward against enemies.
343 Seats for them to rest on, right and left, both outside and
inside, a solid quaintly carved door and lintel, a room above
approached by a ladder from inside, with windows, or openings
whence shots were discharged on lawless intruders, and finally
a thatched roof, complete the characterstics of a gate house.
351 Permission to build such a gate house was a rare privilege and
had to be obtained from the rulers, but with a change in the old
342 order of things, this restriction has, like many others of the kind,
787 ceased to exist. The plan and other details of the structure of
a Nayar house are determined in strict conformity with the
principles of the ancient Hindu science of architecture based on
astrology.[1] A compound or garden is first selected and measured
out into a square plot and is then divided into four parts by
imaginary lines running lengthwise and breadthwise through
the centre or middle of it. Either the north-east or south-west
portion is chosen for the site of a house, the former being preferred
764 to the latter. The south-east corner is generally set
apart as the family burial-ground. There are again special
spots selected for the well, tank, cow-shed, serpent grove and
the family deity. The selection of the site for the house is

---

[1] Chandrika.

177
342 recently were thatched are now being tiled with tiles of
European pattern manufactured either locally or in Mangalore.
342 In these days of comparative peace and security of life and
178 property from marauders and free-booters, the necessity for
massive structures has ceased to exist, and, coupled with this,
the improved notions of architecture, derived from an easy
intercourse with more civilised centres, the rapid progress of
education, and with it a better knowledge of, and regard for,
sanitation and hygiene, have wrought remarkable changes in
the construction of buildings, so that a better class of houses,
well built, airy, and commodious, is displacing the old ones
with their small, dark and ill-ventilated rooms.

351 As part of the surroundings of the dwellings in the same
[343] compound, there are frequently seen a cattle shed, an excavated
tank for bathing purposes, often full of fish and water lilies, a
[312] well so arranged as to admit of water being drawn directly from
[515] it to the kitchen, an out-house *(matam)* for the Brahman
[574] travellers or visitors, and, lastly, a small edifice for the family
deity. The gardens surrounding the houses are adorned with
[343] mango and jack trees, immense bananas, groves of cocoanut
[245] and areca palms and various kinds of flowers. Thus, in most
places, their houses, which are occupied by fine types of
humanity, (well made men and shapely women), are situated
beneath the grateful shade of magnificent avenues of trees.

356 Four hundred years ago, a Portuguese traveller, writing
[175] on the subject, remarks* upon the Nayar houses as being scrupulously
clean and neat. Without any exaggeration it may
be said that they are proverbially so, and the women are either
naturally endowed with a taste, or are trained from early childhood,
352 to keep the houses and everything therein neat and clean.
[556] Those of the richer and middle classes are in these days furnished
[177] with articles of European manufacture, and all their
domestic utensils, for daily use, are made either of bell-metal,
copper or brass, all well cleaned and washed early every morning.

415 The furniture of the poorer classes is very simple; a metal
352 pot with a spout, a few metal plates and saucers, a few metal
412 pans of different sizes, a spitoon of brass, a few mats, a knife,
184 a cot or two, a betel box, and a few wooden bins for grains, are
nearly all the requirements of a household in this respect.

342 The house itself is called by several names according to
564 the occupant's caste, that of an ordinary Nayar being a *veedu*

or *bhavanam*, while the man in authority dwells in an *idam*, 342
and the Raja in a ***kovilakam*** or ***kottaram***. A separate name 564
for each *tarawad* or family is peculiar to this coast.

There are some superstitious beliefs entertained by the Na- 342
yars as well as other high caste-men, in the selection of the site 351
for a house and compound, the quality of the soil, the site of the 823
tank, well, cow-shed, and the edifice for the family deity; and [564]
as an account of these will be of some ethnographic interest, it is given below:—

The best site should abound with milky trees full of fruits and flowers; its boundary should be of a quadrangular form, level and smooth with a sloping declivity towards the east, producing a hard sound with a stream running from left to right, of an agreeable odour, fertile, and of an uniform colour, containing a great quantity of soil, producing water when dug to the height of a man's arm raised above his head, and situated in a region of moderate temperature. The ground possessed of qualities directly opposite to those mentioned above is the worst, and that which has a mixed nature is of the middling quality.[1]

The site to be avoided is described in a special manner as follows:—That which has the form of a circle, or a semicircle, or containing three, five or six angles, or resembling a trident or shaped like the back of a fish, the back of an elephant, or a turtle, or the face of a cow, etc., situated opposite to any of the intermediate quarters abounding with human skulls, stones or worms, ant-hills, bones, slimy earth, decayed wood, coals, dilapidated wells, subterraneous pits, fragments of tiles, limestones, ashes, husks of corns and exposed to the wafted effluvia of curds, oil, honey, dead bodies, and fishes; such a spot should be avoided on every account.

In regard to colour and taste, ground with smell like that
of ghee and with sweet taste is good for Brahmans; that with [822]
the colour and smell of blood and with an astringent taste, for [827]
Kshatriyas; that with yellow colour, smell of boiled rice and bitter taste, for Vaisyas; and that with dark colour, smell of toddy and taste of cow-dung, for Sudras.

There is also a test for the selection of a site by lighting [372]
a lamp in a hole. A hole measuring one cubit in depth,

---

[1] Ramraz's essay on the architecture of the Hindus, London, pp. 15-19.

342
351 having been well plastered with mud, a saucer of unbaked
823 earth filled with ghee and four lighted wicks is placed therein,
372 for testing the quality of the soil. If the wicks burn brightly
● [564] in all four directions, the ground is fit for all the castes including Brahmans and other caste-men. If the wicks do not burn, it will not suit any of the four castes.

Auspicious times for the construction of houses.

342 If the house is constructed by a person in the month of
804 Medam (April-May) he gets disease: in Edavam (May-June) he gets money and
777 jewel: in Mithunam (June-July) there will
822 be death: in Ashad or Karkadakam (July-August) he gets servants and jewels, but no beasts; in Chingam (August-September) friendship; in Kanni (September-October) loss of friends: in Thulam (October-November) death of his wife; in Vrischigam (November-December) money and crops; in Dhanu (December-January) he will become a devotee; in Makaram (January-February) there will be fear from enemies and thieves, but the builder will know of profits from many directions; in Kumbham (February-March), danger of fires; in Meenam (March-April) gold and sons.

The following asterisms are auspicious for commencing a building:—Aswini, Rohini, Mulam, the three Uttaras, Mrigasirsha, Swathi, Hasta, Anuradha. All days of the week, except Sunday and Tuesday, are auspicious. A house should be commenced at auspicious moments known as ***muhurtas***: Sveda, Mitra, Mahendra, Gandharva, Rohini and also Raja Sāvitra. The erection of the pillars should be performed at auspicious ***lagnas***, moments when the sun and the moon are favourable; other moments should be avoided.

Inauspicious times.

342 Building operations should not be commenced in the
777 rainy season nor at the end of the third part
821 of the dark fortnight, and in the first and second part of the bright fortnight. Of the phases of the moon, the fourth, ninth, and fourteenth should be avoided. Tuesday is also to be omitted; for working on that day brings injury or bad luck. Days marked with dangers natural or any other, arising out of the earth, sky, or heavenly bodies and other calamities, such as the death of a friend, and those made ominous by the influence of some planets are considered inauspicious. A well informed person should do his work when the moon and the stars are favourable.

Internal structure of the caste.

564
463
182
174 Caste assigns to each individual his profession or calling; and when once the system is handed down from father to son, and from generation to generation, it is found impossible for any person or his descendants to change for any other the condition of life which the law assigns to him. The most far-sighted and prudent men in ancient times probably found such an institution to be the only means for maintaining a system of civilisation amongst a people endowed with the peculiar characteristics of the Hindus.

The important principle which guided all ancient legislators was, that no man in the commonwealth should be left without work. At the same time, they knew that the people were indolent by nature. They were further aware of the fact that, unless every individual was duly provided with some work, for which he might be best fited, the social fabric must necessarily fall to pieces. The law-givers therefore established durable and inviolable rules for the different castes constituting
[626] the Hindu race, the violation of which brings divine displeasure, and meets with severe punishment both in this world
[688] and in the world to come.

It is some such guiding principle that is involved in the
564 division of the Nayars into various sub-castes. In Kerala the
174 Brahmans seem to have been instrumental in the formation of castes to some extent; for, it is found that some castes have to do services in temples to Brahmans. Distinct professional
[463] groups in the tribal organisations may have existed there before the advent of these people, who probably found it easy to make a ready adjustment of the social groups, and thought it advisable to assign to them well defined occupations. Therefore, the original institution of the caste system does not merit any serious condemnation.

Some are of opinion that it is not quite correct to say that the Nayars are a caste, and that it would be better to call them a tribe, as Bhattacharya has done in his 'Castes and
[114] Sects'. I am however inclined to think that the name is not quite appropriate, and that they do form a caste of people, known as Malayali Sudras.

564 In regard to subdivisions, there is no uniformity. So numerous and varied are they in Cochin, Malabar, and Travancore, that titles of distinction that have been conferred upon

certain families from time to time are being looked upon as subcastes. *Játinirnayam*, a Malayalam work of some authority, which gives an account of Malayali castes, limits the number of subdivisions to eighteen, fourteen of which belong to the high caste Sudras, the remaining four being of low caste Sudras. In the last Census Report of the Cochin State, the same number is kept up with slight modifications, to which I am not inclined to agree. It is not possible at this stage to state the exact number of subdivisions, and the following are those that have come under my personal investigation in the State:— [114]

1. *Kiriyattil Nayars.*—They form the highest of all the Nayar subdivisions in the Cochin State as well as south Malabar. The word *kiriyattil* or *kiriyam* is said to be derived from the Sanskrit, *graham*, which means a house. The derivation is doubtful. The members of this subdivision are believed to have been the descendants of the early Brahmans in their union with the Deva, Gandharva and Rakshasa women brought into Kerala by Parasurama, and their duty has been primarily to serve them. The members of the aristocratic class, who still bear the titles of Panikkar, Kurup, Kaimal, Kartha, Menon, and Menokki belong to this class; in this class are included the old *náduvázhis*, and *desavázhis*—rulers of *náds* and *desams*—the military leaders, Pattola Menons and other *sthánis* or titled persons. Being superior to the members of other subdivisions, the *Kiriyattil* Nayars can cook for all others. The Nayars of this class are, according to current tradition, connected with the sixty-four families of Vellalas, whom Dr. Oppert has tried to identify with the Pallavas.

2. *Illattu Nayars.*—They are known in Cochin and South Malabar also as Sudra Nayars. They are par excellence the attendants and retainers of the Nambuthiris. In many parts of the State and in Malabar, they have, by close contact with the Nambuthiris, fashioned many of their personal habits after the truly Brahmanical style, and are, on that account, classed among the high class Nayars. Very seldom does a Nambuthiri woman go outside without being accompanied by a maid-servant or *dasi* belonging to this class, and every woman of this class is her constant attendant and is indispensable for her various ceremonies. They are, I understand, found very largely in Travancore also, where they form [357]

the highest class. There are many who profess to belong to certain Nambuthiri *illams*, such as the Azhavancheri and other *illams*. They are obliged to be strict vegetarians owing to their service in the Nambuthiri families.

3. *Swarupattil Nayars.*—The members of this class render services to the Kshatriyas. There are, it is said, three [357] minor subdivisions, namely, *Pindiyánmar*, *Patindluvíttukar* and *Chitayans*. The members of the first class serve as menials in the houses of Kshatriyas; those of the second have to supply them with everything necessary for the performance of all kinds of ceremonies; and those of the third serve them during pollution. They appear to correspond to the Chàrnavar and Sudras. Swarupattil Nayars or Swarupakkár (from *swarupam*, princely house) are so called because of their service in princely houses or Kshatriya families. They are next in rank to *Illakkars*.

[167] 4. *Agattu and Purattu Charna Nayars.*—The Chàrna Nayars or Chàrnavar who are mostly immigrants from Malabar include the two subdivisions, Agattu Chárnavar and Purattu Chárnavar, "inside and outside retainers," respectively. There are two explanations of the terms. According to one, the Purattu Chárnavar are the armed retainers of the various chieftains, while the Agattu Chárnavar are the personal and domestic servants. According to the other explanation, the distinction refers to their position at *yágams* (sacrifices) at which it is said that various duties inside the *yágasala* or sacrificial pandal are to be performed by the Agattu Chárna Nayars, while the Purattu Chárna Nayars remain on guard outside. In point of social precedence, the Purattu Chárnavar are ranked superior to the Agattu Chárnavar, probably because the latter do not belong to any of the fighting clans. A woman of [582] the former may mate with a man of the latter, but not *vice* [264] *versa*. Only the men of the two subdivisions may eat together, but the women may mate with men of their own clan or of any other or with a Nambuthiri. The men of this class form *sambandhams* in South Malabar with the Kiriyattil women. The caste-men affix the title of Nayar after their names. There are many of this class found in the State.

[451] 5. *Menókki and Pattóla Menon.*—Men of these castes serve as accountants in temples and in aristocratic families,

The above two subdivisions are mere titles and the members belonging to them are not numerous in the State. 564

6. *Márár.*—The members of this subdivision act as drummers and musicians in temples and also render important services to Brahmans and Kshatriyas in their ceremonies. [534]

7. *Pádamangalam Nayars.*—The members of this clan are engaged in escorting processions in temples. Some also act as sweepers in them. There are not, I am informed, very many in the State belonging to this subdivision. [788]

8. *Pallichán Nayars.*—These are palanquin-bearers of the Brahmans and Kshatriyas.

9. *Vattekád Nayars.*—They are the pressers of oil for use in temples. It has been remarked by some that the Vattékád Nayars are not always admitted to be true Nayars and that in some places they are called Vániyans (oil mongers.) The subdivision is endogamous. There are two minor subdivisions, the members of which neither interdine nor intermarry.

10. *Chempukotti Nayars.*—These are the workers in copper for temples and Brahman houses. The following tradition regarding them is interesting :— 564 326

"Chempukottis or Chempóttis (copper tappers) are copper-workers whose traditional business is the roofing of the ***srikóvil*** or inner shrine of the temple with that metal. They are said to have originally formed part of the *Kammálan* or artisan community. When the great temple of Taliparamba was completed, it was purified on a scale of unprecedented grandeur, no less than thousand Brahmans being employed. What was their dismay when the ceremony was well forward, to see a Chempukotti coming from the ***srikóvil***, where he had been putting the finishing touches to the roof! This appeared to involve a re-commencement of the whole tedious and costly ritual ; and the Brahmans gave vent to their feelings of despair, when a vision from Heaven re-assured them. And thereafter Chempótties have been raised in the social scale, and are not regarded as a polluting caste." [1] [778]

11. *Otattu Nayars.*—They are the tile and thatch makers for temples and Brahman houses. 564

12. *Edachéri Nayars.*—They are the makers and sellers of dairy produce.

---

[1] **Malabar District Gazetteer, page 120.**

D

564 13. *Anduran Nayars.*—These Nayars are the manufacturers of earthenware for use in temples.

~~14.~~ *Attikurusi Nayars.*—They are the priests who officiate at funeral ceremonies for all sub-castes above them.

In respect of the fourteen subdivisions of the high caste *Sudrás*, it must be said that the non-military classes, namely, the Otattu Nayars, Chempukotti, Anduran, Pallichán and Vattékád Nayars, have to be treated as an intermediate class of *Sudrás*, because there is neither interdining nor intermarriage between the members of these subdivisions and those treated as high caste *Sudrás*; but they are classed among the high caste *Sudrás* on account of their services in temples, which give them the privilege to enter them and bathe in public tanks. [264] [582]

Under the head of low caste Sudrás are included four sub-castes, namely Tharakans, Velakkathalavans, Veluthédans, and Cháliyans, who pollute other Nayars by touch, and who are on that account called low caste Sudrás. Pollution by touch appears to be the basis for the above classification, and on this principle, the three castes except the Tharakans are treated as low caste *Sudras*; for, their touch pollutes all castes above them. The Tharakans had been a trading class, but they have now taken to other professions. They are a Tamil class and are the least Malayáli to be brought on a level with the high caste Sudrás, though in their customs they are almost like the latter. A similar process of assimilation has been and is still going on among some of the Tamil castes of the Chittur Taluk as well as elsewhere, by which the members of such castes are developing themselves into Nayars.

553 554 Titles. The Nayars affix to their names one of the following titles, the origin and significance of which are given below:—

1. *Kartha.*—The word means a 'doer', and appears to have been used as a title by some of the old Madura kings. The rulers of Cochin are said to have confirmed this title on some influential Nayar families, and made them petty chieftains subject to their paramountcy. All the Karthás belong to the *Illam* division of the Nayar caste. Among the old families in the Cochin State still possessing this title are Chéránellur Kartha near Ernakulam, Kódasséri Kartha near Chálakudi, and Kuzhupilli Kartha. [551]

553
554 Malabar, where it is a creation of the *Zamorin*.

7. *Asán.*—The word means a teacher. He is also a head-man (*Karayinmél Asán*), who has certain social functions in connection with the marriage and other ceremonies.

8. *Achan.*—The word means father. It is the title of the Palghat Rajas, the ministers of the Calicut and Cochin Rajas (Mángát Achan and Páliyat Achan), and also of several other old Nayar chiefs.

9. *Mannátiyar.*—This is the title of certain aristocratic families in the Chittur Taluk near Palghat. The word is derived from *man*, earth, and *nétiyavar*, earners.

Marriage prohibitions.

564
582
833
783 Among the high caste Sudras marriage is hypergamous, while the low caste Sudras are endogamous. This is the general rule, though exceptions may sometimes be found. A Nayar is allowed to cohabit with a woman lower in the social scale than himself, but his womenkind are prohibited from exercising the same liberty. This is called the *Anulómam* and *Prathilómam*. Dr. Gundert derives *Anulomam* ' from *Anu* with *lómam rómam* the hair, going with the hair or grain. So *Prathilómam* means going against the hair or grain. According to this usage, a Nayar woman, consorting with a man of the higher caste, follows the hair, purifies the blood, raises the progeny in social estimation. By cohabitation with a man of lower subdivision, clan or caste, she is guilty of *Prathilómam*; and if the difference of caste were admittedly great, she would be turned out of her family to prevent the whole family being boycotted.[1]

564
582
783 The rule of *Anulómam* and *Prathilómam* is everywhere observed with great strictness. In many cases, Nambuthiris, Embráns, Póttis and Tamil Brahmans, Kshatriyas and

---

[784]
[562]
[-84]

[1] Alliances between the people of North Malabar and South Malabar seem to be extremely rare. It is partly because of the principle of Prathilomam and perhaps partly that the Nayar women cannot cross the Korapuzha which marks the boundary between the two Nor can the women of the extreme north of North Malabar cross the river between it and South Canara. The reason is said to be that the Kolatheri Raja so commanded owing to the fear that was entertained about their being captured and taken as wives by the Arabs. Similarly, till about fifty years ago the Nayar women from North Travancore and Cochin were prohibited from going beyond Quilon southward. These customs are being overlooked by the educated members of the community and it may almost be said that the custom has begun to die out.

Further, in the extreme south of South Malabar a high caste bride mates with a low caste bridegroom on the Prathilomam already explained. The husband cannot touch her without pollution, when she is engaged in taking meals. In the case of Nambuthiris, the same custom is in force and they cannot be seen, while engaged in religious ceremonies or taking meals. With the spread of education, official status, wealth, power, and influence, many of these time-honoured customs are fast disappearing.

Ambalavásis form alliances with Nayar women, but the 564
latter and their children cannot touch their husbands and 582
fathers without polluting them. The children of this union 783
belong to the mother's family. In the clan system, descent was at first reckoned in the female line; consequently, uterine ties alone constituted kinship. The father was not regarded as related even to his children, and not considered as a member of the family. In this system all the children bear the clan name, and the clan name becomes the test of blood relationship. But the moment the descent is recognised through the male, the clan system breaks down. Among the Nayars the kinship is still reckoned through the female line.

Marriage is endogamous among the low caste Sudrás. 564
The following restrictions are however in force among all classes 582
of Sudrás. There cannot be intermarriages between the descendants of any female ancestor. It is strictly prohibited even [614]
in the case of two persons belonging to the same *taravād* or family whose relationship cannot be traced to its origin, but is only traditional. A man cannot marry the sister of his deceased wife. The custom is more changing. A man cannot marry from the family of his deceased wife, but is now limited to the *thāvashi* to which his wife belonged. Even this is now being overlooked.

* * *

588 a white cloth, one over the other. His permission is solicited
622 for the performance of the ceremony, and, with his consent,
[465] the *táli* is tied. He is paid four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two or
sixty-four *puthans* (one *puthan* is equal to ten pies), according to
the means of the family. He also gets some curry stuffs, betel
588 leaves, arecanuts and tobacco. There is also at the time a
574 grand distribution of *pán supári*, scented sandal paste, jasmine
[431] flowers to the women of the village and to the wives of the
relatives assembled there. Then follows the feast to the
guests assembled there, for which certain formalities are observed,
with regard to the seats arranged for them; any violation
of the social etiquette will result in the guests abruptly leaving
the dining hall without partaking of any food. The women of
the family and their relatives are first served. The women of
the sub-caste as well as those of the village return home after
chewing betel. The men of the same sub-castes and others are
[564] next served, then others lower in status to them, and lastly
come in for their share the village barber and washerman.
Provision is sometimes made to feed the members of the
very low castes. In the meanwhile, what is known as *Pakarcha*
(cooked rice, curries, sweets, etc., for the feasts) is sent to the
families of relations. It must be said that the various
[262] preparations of the feast are boiled rice, vegetable curries,
páyasam (rice boiled in milk) and butter milk, and the
grandness of the feast is judged by the quantity of rice
prepared for consumption, and other preparations are in proportion
to it. The first day's ceremony and the feast thus come
to an end. The ceremony however lasts for the next three
days, but there is nothing of importance on the second and the
third days, except some dancing and music by maidens inside
the *pandal*. In some places, on the third day, the caste-men of
the village are treated to a luncheon of rice and milk pudding
and to varieties of amusements, such as the *Kathakali* and
other performances.

588 On the fourth day, the caste-men are again invited. The
[564] married couple bathe in the neighbouring tank or river holding
each other's hand, and are taken in procession to worship the
deity in the village temple amidst the beating of tom-toms and
merry shouts, after which the party return home. The bridegroom
and the bride are taken to the kitchen, which they are
[586] prohibited from entering during the first three days, and there
they dine together. After this, they proceed to the pandal where

585

nuts, which are also given to all the persons assembled at the 184
place. After the departure of the guests, the bridegroom re- [431]
tires to the bed room with the bride.

This is an unvarnished account of a *Pudamuri*. Next morning *veetil kettu* or *salkâram* ceremony follows, and the relations of the bridegroom take the bride to the husband's house, where the bride's party are treated to a grand feast ".[1]

The orthodox view of this form of marriage.

The *sambandham* or *Pudamuri* ceremony is not a mar- 585
riage in the legal or sacramental sense of the 564
term. The views of the members of the 184
orthodox community in Malabar, who are the expounders of the existing customs, are of great ethnographic importance. It is said that the Nambuthiris consort with Nayar females by *sambandham*, and precisely the same ceremony is gone through whether the husband is a Nambuthiri or a Nayar. The Nambuthiris do not look upon it as a marriage. Where a Brahman is a bridegroom, he cannot eat with his Sudra wife, and is therefore unable to join with his wife in the wedding feast. There is no comparison of horoscopes. The [831]
aristocracy of the District of Malabar, the Rajas who are admittedly the heads of the Nayar caste, and the Nambuthiris who are the expounders of religion, opine, that chastity is not one of the duties prescribed for the Nayar community and *slokas* (verses) are quoted to prove this. This view is not held in the Cochin State.

In the Malabar Marriage Commission, one hundred and 586
ninety-seven witnesses admitted the undoubted fact that either party to the union may terminate it at any time from wantonness, caprice or any other reason, and that if the couple joined together by *Pudamuri* were satisfied with one night of hymeneal bliss, there is no legal impediment to prevent their separating without any formality on the following morning. Ninety-one witnesses alleged some formality to be necessary, and that parties should not separate without the approval of their *kâranavans* or of their relatives or of their caste people. There was also a small minority (twenty-one witnesses) who [562]
denied to the women the right of divorce which they accorded to man, assigning as their reason, that, under the Hindu Law, no woman can be independent. This minority would deprive

---

[1] Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 35-37,

562 *marumakkathdyam* of its one great merit, *viz.*, that in sexual matters it places the man and the woman on terms of equality [851] giving equal freedom to both. With practical unanimity, the witnesses admitted that the man may turn away the woman, and that under the *marumakkathdyam* law, he is in no way responsible for the maintenance of the children whom he has begotten upon her. Further, the person that begot a child in a *marumakkathdyam* female was originally regarded as a casual visitor and the sexual relation depended for his continuance on mutual consent.[1]

585 556 564 581 The views expressed above are those of the landed aristocracy, and the rulers who were admittedly of the Nayar caste, as also those of the somewhat selfish class of the Nambuthiris, of Malabar, who, to gratify their selfish ends, quote chapter and verse of their own creation in support of the existing custom and teachings, which the Nayars of these days will never submit to. All or nearly all of them cling to one wife for life, and with them *sambandham* is the real marriage, *de facto* and *de jure*. This is the real state of affairs in the States of Cochin and Travancore as well as in British Malabar. 581 The present and growing tendency in all cases, in which, a man, whether a Nambuthiri or a Nayar, consorts with a Nayar woman, is to look upon her as the true wife, and the children of such unions are looked upon as theirs and duly provided for, so far as their means permit. The statement is to a certain extent confirmed by Mr. Logan, who was the Collector of Malabar for many years and thus had ample opportunities of knowing a great deal of Malabar and its people. He says, "this part of Malabar has, in the hands of unenquiring commentators, brought much undeserved obloquy on the morality of the people. The fact, at any rate, of recent years, is that, although the theory of the law sanctions freedom in these relations, conjugal fidelity is very general. Nowhere is the marriage tie, albeit, informal, more rigidly observed or respected, nowhere is it more jealously guarded or its neglect more savagely avenged. Their very looseness of the law makes the individual observances closer, for people have been watchful over the things they are most liable to lose. The absence of a ceremonial has encouraged the popular impression, but a ceremonial,

---

[1] Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 38 to 44.

177
582 intentions to register *sambandhams* was thirty-six in 1896—97,
585 twenty-four in 1897—98 and only fourteen in 1898—99." He accounts for the falling off as follows:—

The mass of the people continues to regard the marriage law with aversion and suspicion, and even the educated members of the community who are in favour of the measure, shrink from taking advantage of it from fear of offending the elderly members of their *tarawdds*, and all the powerful Nambuthiris and other great landlords. The Registrar of Calicut also points out, that the power conferred by the marriage law, to make provision for one's own wife and children, has hitherto acted as some inducement to persons to register their *sambandhams*, but as Act V of 1898 (Madras) which came into force from 2nd September 1898, enables the followers of the *marumakkathdyam* law to attain this object without registering their *sambandhams*, and "unnecessarily curtailing their liberty of action, and risking the chances of divorce proceedings," he thinks it unlikely that registration under the marriage law would increase in future.

Polyandry.

595 Among the Nayars of ancient times in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore, there was polyandry. In the report of the Malabar Marriage Commission, it is said, that there is evidence to show that it still lingers in Ponnani and Walluvanad Taluks, especially on the Cochin border of the former Taluk.[1] Apart from its existence in former times, it may be said that nowhere in these States is the custom still found to linger, no admitted instance of it has come to my notice in the course of my investigations into the customs and manners of the castes in the various parts of the State. An account of these customs as it existed in ancient times, and the theories that have been advanced in respect of it are of some ethnographical importance, and it may not be out of place here.

[593]
[604]
[582]
● [564] The Nayars of ancient times were, in most cases, neither regularly married, nor did they care much, when married, to support their wives and children; but their nephews (sons of sisters), who were their legitimate heirs, were properly looked after. Nayar women generally mated with Brahmans or Nayars, but never with people of lower caste under pain of

---

[1] Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 83.

death

death. At ten or twelve years of age of a girl, her mother 595
begged some one of their relations to marry her, and they did so [588]
by tying a mariage badge (*tali*). Then the bridegroom would leave her and go away without any consideration of his new relationship. She might also remain with him if he wished it. If she was not inclined to do so, the mother would then go about seeking some one to take her daughter to live with him. If the girl happened to be pretty, three or four Nayars would agree to live with her, and the more lovers she had, the more highly was she esteemed. Each man had his appointed time from midday to the next day at the same hour, during which some signal was placed at the door so that the others might not enter. She was at liberty to dismiss whomsoever she disliked. The advantage of this system was, that a man, who had not the means to support a wife, might have only a share of the cost of the maintenance. Nevertheless, there was a difficulty in ascertaining the fathers of children, who generally lived with the mothers by whom they were brought up. The fathers, in such cases, were named by the mothers. It is said that the kings made this law in order that the
Nayars might not abandon their service. According to this [604]
system, the fathers were not succeeded by their sons but by
nephews (sons of sisters). The above is a summarised account [175]
from 'The Travels on the East coast of Africa and Malabar' by Duarte Barbosa, from those of Lodovico Varthema, as also from the voyage of Frankoy Pyrard, page 371.

Origin of the custom of polyandry.

The orthodox view or rather the traditional account 595
according to the *Keralamahatmyam*,[1] is that 773
certain celestial damsels were brought from the world of Indra by Parasurama to satisfy the sexual cravings of the Kerala Brahmans; and that at Vrishabhadri (Trichur), he pronounced his commandment to the *Sámanthan* and *Sudra* castes to gratify the desires of the said Brahmans, ordering them to put off chastity and the cloth which covered their breasts, and declaring that promiscuous intercourse with three or four men in common was devoid of the least taint of
sin. This is certainly a very convenient arrangement for the 595
junior members of the Nambuthiri families to be relieved of [564]
their life-long bachelorhood (*Bramhacharyam*) without any

---

[1] Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 17.

Kerala AW11
Nayar

● 564
592
613
614

/For information on the function of the Taravād as a clan, lineage and matrilineal household unit, the researcher is advised to check all three categories listed above./

595

564 [184] responsibility to support their wives and children from their family property. Whether it was introduced by the Nambuthiris, it is difficult to believe; and it is to be noted, that it was prevailing to a considerable extent in North Malabar, among whom and other low castes their influence was less than in South Malabar and the Cochin State.

83 564 The *Smriti*[1] says, "the Sudras' appointed path to Heaven is serving the Brahmans". "The practice of Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, having sexual intercourse with the servile women is in accordance with the *sástrás*. If a Brahman wish to have sexual intercourse with a Sudra wife, the Sudra is bound to gratify the wish. A Sudra cannot be sure of the true parentage of his children". Again, before the Malabar Marriage Commission, the Zamorin Maharaja Bahadur, Ettan Thampuran Avergal, a learned Sanskrit scholar, Kolattúr Váriar and other respectable witnesses unanimously deposed, that, in Kerala, a non-Brahman or *marumakkatháyam* woman need not be chaste, and she is not forbidden to consort with more than one man. [178] To such teachings of the learned and influential leaders of the orthodox community, the Nayars of these days will no longer submit.

595 701 Another important theory connects the practice with the military organisation of the Nayar community. Montaigue was evidently of opinion, that it was introduced, because the Nayar leaders looked upon an army of bachelors as the most effective instrument in war.[2] [833] The subjection of the males of a whole race from the earliest youth to the decline of manhood must therefore have been the cause of the fugitive connection and promiscuous intercourse.

174 595 European writers, such as Baron Avebury, Meyr, Mc. Linan, and others, have arrived at the conclusion, that the system of inheritance now prevalent among the Nayars must have originated from a type of polyandry resembling free love. [591] [592] In ancient times, the rule was that the wife should remain in her own house and be visited by her husband, and that the eldest female was at the head of the house, which was afterwards transferred to the eldest male. [842] The part of man in the function of generation passed as of secondary importance or as

---

[1] Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 17.

[2] Essays of Michael Montaigue,

843 The juice dribbles down the knife into her mouth, and she drinks
[602] it. In the absence of a brother, some other near relation offi-
ciates. After she has swallowed the tamarind juice, she is asked
[824] to pick one grain out of several packets of different grains
placed before her. The grain in the packet is supposed to
[574] declare the sex of the child in her womb. The whole ceremo-
ny is wound up by a sumptuous feast to all the relatives and
[787] friends of the family. The *enangan's* wife at the time pours oil
over the head of the pregnant woman. If the oil flows on the
left side, it predicts the birth of a female; if on the right side, a
male.

Childbirth.

844 When a Nayar woman is about to become a mother, she
is placed in a reclining position on a low
wooden couch (*kattódom*), her back suppor-
ted by a companion, generally an old woman. The *kattódom*
is very like, if not identical with, the couch on which the Nayar
woman has her oil bath. The surface of it is sloping, the
higher end being where the head is laid, and it is scooped out
so as to suit the curvatures of the body lying flat. Lying on
her back, the thighs are stretched wide apart. Very often
she holds in each hand a rope suspended from the ceiling by
[564] way of support. The child is received by a woman of the
barber caste, who generally officiates as midwife, and in some
places this duty is performed by a woman of the Vélan caste.
846 Pollution is observed for fifteen days, and on every day, the
mother wears cloths, washed and presented her by *Vannáthi* (a
woman of the washerman caste). On the fifteenth day is the
purificatory ceremony. As in the case of death pollution, a
man of the Athikurussi clan sprinkles on the woman a liquid
mixture of oil, and the five products of the cow (*panchagavyam*)
with gingelly seeds. Then the woman dips herself in a tank
or river or sits on the ground near the bank, and a maid servant
pours on her head the water from a vessel as many as
[184] twenty-one times. This practice is not universal, though it
certainly obtains in the State and in some parts of South
Malabar and Travancore.

846
252 It may be noticed that, before the mother proceeds to
purify herself, the new born baby has also to undergo some
rite of purification. The baby is placed on the bare floor, and
its father or uncle sprinkles a few drops of cold water on it

551 The names of Nayars present great varieties and those most commonly met with are the following:—

(a) **Andi Menon**
Kandar Menon
Kannan Menon
Ittirayarachan
Korappan
Koman Menon
Kumara Menon
Thenchu Menon
Konthu Nayar
Escharan Nayar

(b) **Raman**
Krishnan
Govindan
Gopalan
Achyuthan
Sankaran
Narayanan
Madhavan
Sreedharan
Raghavan
Neelacandhan
Velayudhan

(c) **Names of females:**
Kunjikavu
Chirutha
Ichon
Kotha
Nangeli
Ooli
Cheeru
Cheeronna
Ichi
Ittiri
Mukami
Oonni Maya

(d) **Kalyani**
Lakshmi
Madhavi
Rugmani
Seetha
Subhadra
Narayani
Dakshayani
Karthyayani
Meenakshi
Gowri
Bhargavi
Janaki
Parvathi
Sreedevi

(e) **Pet names of males:**
Appu
Appukuttan
Kuttan
Balan

(f) **Pet names of females:**
Nani *(Narayani)*
Mathu *(Madhavi)*
Kunju (Kunjukutti)
Escheri *(Easwari)*
Parukutti.

55
564 The names of males given under (a) are those which appear to be caste names, probably given by the Nambuthiris, who are generally fond of these contracted and disguised appellations. The Nambuthiris say, that the Sudras were so ordained by Manu as not to be called by fair names. They were the landlords and priests, and the Nayars had to do servile work for them. They thought that they ought to keep the Sudras in complete ignorance, and could not endure to hear them talking distinctly in their presence. On one occasion, it is said that when a Sudra servant uttered the words "*Súrya Rasmi* (sun's rays)," his master was so displeased, that he closed his ears, for he could not bear to hear a servile fellow using so elegant a phrase from Sanskrit. On another occasion, when a Brahman overheard a Sudra uttering the words *ahimsa paramo dharma* (the highest of all duties is not to injure anybody), he said to himself, "what a pity it is, that a Sudra should be able to quote a vedic expression!". Their influence in these and other matters began gradually to diminish after the time of the great Malayalam peot, Thunjathu Rámanujan. [776] The names of the caste-men given under (b) are chiefly the various designations of Krishna, Rama and Siva, all of whom are worshipped with equal reverence. [782] Some think that the Nayars are chiefly the worshippers of Vishnu, but the fact that, when at Benares, Rameswaram and [769] other places, they perform the ceremonies of offering of rice-balls in honour of their deceased ancestors, calling their ancestors

551 *Sivagothrakár* (worshippers or followers of Siva), would seem to 564 indicate that they reverence Siva more than Vishnu. [782]

A Nayar tarawad or marumakkathayam family.

"No people" says Elie Reclus, "have more fully appre- [769] ciated the maternal family, nor developed it 613 more logically than the Nayars, despite the 592 accumulated obstacles thrown in its way by a race admirably intelligent and moreover victorious."[1] The *tarawád* or *marumakkathayam* family consists in theory of all persons who can trace their descent in the female line from a single ancestress. In its simplest form it is one which consists of mother and her children, living together with their maternal uncle, that is the mother's brother, as *káranavan* or the senior male member of the family. In its complex form it consists of a mother and all her children, both male and female, all her grand children by her daughters, all her brothers and sisters and the descendants on the sisters' side,—in short, all the relatives of the woman on the female side, however distant their relationship, living together in the same block of buildings, dining together in the same hall and enjoying all the property in common. No descendant through the male line can be a member of such a family. There are at present instances of families containing a hundred or more members who live in one or more buildings situated in a large compound and who are the descendants of one woman separated perhaps by generations of descent, and yet able to trace their common descent from one ancestress.

In such a family the woman senior to others in age was originally mistress or head of the family, and she reigned or governed. Her eldest daughter was prime minister in the family, and through her all orders were transmitted to her little world. The son recognised the priority of the mother before whom he did not even venture to seat himself, unless she had given him permission. The brother obeyed the elder [593] sister, and respected the younger ones. In fact, the affection [581] between brother and sister was a feeling that endured, while conjugal love was but a passing sentiment. The wives of brothers and sons held but a secondary position in the family. The Nayars loved their families more than [842] anything else in the world, and made it the end of their existence. Like all Hindus they held reprehensible the man who

---

[1] **Primitive folk, page 159.**

rights. Thus did these *kúttams* (assemblies) exercise a wholesome 643
influence, and act as a powerful check upon the rulers 646
and ministers of the middle ages.[1] They also dealt with wider
questions of castes and other matters affecting the welfare of
the people. In former times there were also minor councils 623
of *Pramánis* or leaders of the people in every *Desam* exercising
similar social functions. A survival of this system even now
exists in every village, and their deliberations and decisions
upon social matters and caste disputes have great weight. In
important matters such as the outcasting of a member of the
caste, etc., His Highness the Raja who has always been the [643]
social as well as the political head of the State would deliberate [692]
upon them with the help of the Brahman *vaidiks*, and his decisions
become final. The individual who is placed under a ban [688]
is prohibited from entering any temple, bathing in the public
tanks, and is, in short, ostracised.

Administration of Justice.

The Rajas were in former times the fountain of all justice, 643
but were assisted by *Karyakkars* or ministers 692
and Brahmans in administering it. All caste
disputes and offences were left to the caste assemblies to deal 623
with, while civil disputes were either left to the arbitration of 68
the caste assemblies or of three or four prominent men. There 564
was no written code, but the punishments assigned by custom [670]
fitted the crimes, and they varied with the status of the caste
and of the person. The nobles enjoyed the privilege of freedom
from confinement. The Brahmans and women were never
put to death; the former were punished for grave offences by
loss of caste and banishment, and the latter by being sold as
slaves. The punishment of death was reserved for such heinous [688]
offences as sacrilege, the wilful murder of a Brahman or a
cow. The following is a summary of the account given by 175
Duarte Barbosa, pp. 116—117, regarding the methods of dealing 564
with criminals and the nature of the punishments inflicted on 685
them in former times:—When any member of a low caste committed
robbery about which a complaint had been made to the
king or the governor, orders were issued for his apprehension, and
if he was caught and he confessed his guilt, he was generally
impaled. His head was severed, and the body being placed
on its back, the arms and legs were fastened with ropes to four
posts, while the multitude to show their contempt spat upon it.
If, however, the malefactor was a Moor, he was beheaded. The

---

[1] Letters from Malabar by J. C. Visscher, pages 76-77.

175 The
stolen property went to the ruler of the State. If the stolen property
564 was discovered after the escape of the thief, it was returned
685 to the owner after a certain number of days, and a fourth part
[643] was appropriated by the State. If, however, a thief refused to
[425] confess his guilt, he was confined for a period of eight days
during which every method of torture known to the keepers of
[695] the prisons was tried to extort his confession. If he continued
in reiterating his innocence, it was left to the accuser to elect
695 whether he should be let off or forced to undergo trial by ordeal.
In the latter case, on an auspicious day, the accused would be
175 allowed to bathe and recite his daily prayers, after which he was
685 conducted to the idol in the temple. Before the idol he swore
564 that he had not committed the theft nor did he know the guilty
person, and plunged his two fingers up to the middle joint into
a caldron of boiling oil. If he was burnt, he was accounted
guilty of the crime; if unhurt, he was liberated. Another form
of proving the guilt or innocence of a prisoner who would not
confess his crime, was to make him thrust his hand into a
mantle in which a sacred and poisonous snake had been wrapped
and force him to lift it out. If he was bitten, he was
guilty. A third form was the wading through a tank full of
alligators before a pagoda at Palliport, fifteen miles north of
175 Cochin, and if he survived he was considered innocent."[1] Concerning
the procedure against the debtors, a curious custom
686 seems to have prevailed, which is thus described by *Varthema*:—

" Let us suppose the case that some one has to pay me twenty-five ducats, and the debtor promises me to pay them many times and does not pay them. I, not being willing to wait any longer, nor to give him any indulgence, shall take a green branch in my hand, shall go softly behind the debtor, and with the said branch shall draw a circle on the ground surrounding him; and if I can enclose him in a circle, shall say to him these words three times: 'I command you by the head of the Brahmans and the king that you do not depart hence, until you have paid me and satisfied me as much as I ought to have from thee,' and he will satisfy me or truly he will die without any other guard, and should he quit the said circle, the king will put him to death. "

175 " It has been already said, that the nobles enjoyed
564 exemption and privileges, and that they could not be taken and
681 put in irons; but if a noble were to rob or kill any one or a
cow or to sleep with a woman of low caste or of the Brahmans

---

[1] Letters from Malabar by J. C. Visscher, pages 68-69.

175
or if he ate and drank in the house of a low caste-man or spoke 564
ill of the king, and if any one of these were established in his 681
own words, the king would call three or four honorable gentlemen and have him put to death. After he was dead, they laid him on his back, to place the king's warrant on his breast. If he was left dead in the country, the dead was so exposed as a prey to vultures and dogs. If he was put to death in the city, the dead body was allowed to be removed either as a mark of favour, or on payment of fine, by the citizens with the king's permission. If, on the other hand, he commits any other offence, he would be dealt with in the same way as any criminal already described."

Cruel as the administration of justice might appear to be 69
in ancient times, many early writers bear testimony to the fact 181
that private property was as secure in the fourteenth century as
it is to-day, and that security and justice were firmly established
in the land. Varthema was impressed with the honesty of the
inhabitants; and the favourable testimony of the previous
writers was confirmed by Pyrard-De-Laval, a Frenchman, who
remarked that justice was well administered and awarded
gratuitously. These systems have been completely forgotten [178]
and given place to the institution of regular courts, where
justice is administered in accordance with the principles of
British jurisprudence.

Feudalism in the Cochin State.

From the earliest times, even perhaps before the Aryan 701
immigration, there appears to have been a com- 634
plete military organisation among the Sudras 621
of Malabar. The country was divided into *Náds*, or principalities, and the smallest territorial unit in it was a *Désam* (or village) presided over by a *Désavázhi* (ruler of a *Désam*). Each of the *Désams* and *Náds* was designated by the allotted quota of Nayars it was required to put into the field. The names of these divisions, even after the long lapse of time, have not been
forgotten. The authority of the chiefs of these military divi- [428]
sions, large and small, was hereditary in their respective families and they had appropriate titles of distinction. They were not always in attendance on the Raja's person. If not required on particular State duties or religious services, they were called out for offensive or defensive warfare.

A chief was not considered a *Náduvázhi* (ruler of a *Nad*), who had not at least a hundred soldiers attached to him, and one with less than that number was called a Désavázhi.

643
the eye, buffaloes with white tips to their tails, wild elephants 422
caught in traps and wild hogs that had fallen into wells. 825

Even in social matters, these chieftains had supreme 634
powers. In the settlement of marriages in any part of the
country, the Nayars had to obtain the chieftain's sanction 585
who held sway over the particular locality. The custom is even [182]
now in vogue though in a visibly weakened form. In the [431]
celebration of a *Kettu kalyánam* or *sambandham* in any part
of the country, the parties concerned visited the chieftain and
bought his consent with presents. For without such consent
no settlement and celebration thereafter could be arranged. His [574]
consent had to be procured even for the holding of festivals.

The chieftain's powers were so great that, if a wife living 595
with her husband proved an object of attraction to another, 634
adequate presents to the chieftain would buy him a formal writ,
giving him the rights of a husband over that woman. Thus
even so late as only a generation or two ago, the chieftain's
power was exercised in the encouragement of polyandry.

When a tali-tying ceremony had to be performed for a 588
girl of any decent family in a locality, she was taken to the 634
local chieftain with a nuzzar or *tirumulkázhcha* and other 421
things prepared for the festival that was to follow. In return
the girl was given a golden bracelet which she was authorised
to wear in his presence. No girl who had not received such a
one could wear it.

In certain parts of the State people were afraid to erect 634
buildings of more than one storey, lest they should incur the 342
inexorable wrath of the chieftain; nor were they allowed to tile
thatched houses. Departures from these customs were allowed
only with the consent of the chieftain, embodied in a writ
issued by him. In rural parts even to this day such restric- [369]
tions are not totally inoperative. In the State His High- [182]
ness the Raja gives his sanction in regard to some social 643
matters even to this day and Nambutiri landlords exercise a 566
similar authority among the tenants occupying their lands.
Certain kinds of conveyances such as palanquins and dholies 634
were reserved only for chieftains while the *Pallichans* were the [493]
only people who were employed to carry them. Various titles[1] [564]
[553]

---

[1] Vide pages [illegible].

634
553 were conferred upon the people. These were, in brief, the rights and privileges[1] of the feudal chieftains of old.

Village organisation and village life.

621 The question regarding the existence in ancient times of a village organisation in the Cochin State, as in Malabar, is somewhat unsettled. Some are of opinion that the village communities of the east coast have no counterpart in the west, and that there were no regular villages; while others state that the organisation of the country for agrarian, civil, social, and administrative purposes was the ordinary type closely allied to the Tamil nationalities, the cradle of its races, languages, and institutions: and that it rested on the village system in its truest and simplest form. The earliest social organisation was apparently based upon the family group into which the various tribes or castes divided themselves, each with its more or less well defined territorial limits. The Brahmans were grouped in
[634] *grámams* and the Nayars in *thards* or *chéris*. The old territorial unit was a *désam* presided over by *Désavázhi* or *Jenmidar*, and a number of *désams* constituted a *nád* ruled over by a *Náduvazhi* or local chieftain who was subject to the Raja.
622 The rights and privileges of the *Désavázhi* were: (1) the direction of the religious ceremonies of the village pagodas, (2) the management of the village pagoda lands and servants, (3) the control of marriages and other ceremonies in the village, and (4) the superintendence of all offences of the *désam* or village. He had besides the civil direction of the religious and military affairs of the villages. The same head-man was a *Désavázhi* or *Jenmi* according as he exercised all or only the first two functions in the village.
634 The *Náduvázhi* was the military chief of
[622] his *nád* who was bound to attend the Raja and to march wherever he was directed with all the fighting men of his terri-
[701] tory under the control of *Désavázhis* of their respective vil-
[451] lages. In time of peace he collected the ordinary and extra revenue, and was helped by one or two accountants. Thus an
[651] old typical village was one which consisted of the houses of
621 the military class of Nayars and of those of other low castes,
[564] the members of which, like the medieval guilds, were bound together by the ties of common interests, rendering to one another reciprocal services for a share of the village produce, and for the protection which they enjoyed. The village in

---

[1] Malabar and Its Folk, pages 108-127.

only training was the training of the memory, and the learned 872
pedagogue never bestowed a thought on cultivating the thinking 876
powers or the originality of his pupils. But this type of [78]
school and school-master is fast disappearing under the modern regime of elementary schools.

Next in importance to the school-master is the Kaniyan, 79
an indispensable factor in the affairs and ceremonies of the 554
village.[1]

Then come the artisan classes whose services are neces- 564
sary in the construction of houses, and the making of implements of agriculture. They were paid for their work either in kind or in coin.

The other men of importance in the village economic life were the physician, the village washerman, and the village barber. The village physician was a man of parts; for, not only [759]
did he tend the sick and the ailing, but also cast out devils [791]
from persons possessed, and with the aid of well prepared charms guarded them from the effects of the evil eye. The village washermen were of the Veluthédan and the Mannán caste. The services of the former were always requisitioned [783]
when people wished to become free from pollution, an act the omission of which leads to outcasting.

The village barber is another indispensable factor in the [305]
village ceremony and is employed for the shaving before all ceremonies. His privileges cannot be encroached upon by his own caste-men from other villages.

The village organisation above described is preserved to a 621
certain extent even now and most probably the Kaniyan's pro- 182
fession will survive all other relics of Hindu institutions, as his services are considered to be of essential importance in matters [79]
of every day life.

Village pastimes.

The ordinary games pursued by the young men of the 526
village are the foot-ball matches, *Attakalam*, *Kayydmkali*, and *Kaikottikkali* (a favourite circular dance of the women), *Uzhinjúl* and others, while cards and chess are common enough on festive occasions. Cock- [541]
fighting is an interesting pastime among the lower classes. [554]

The most important of the village pastimes are the dra- 536
matic performances, a description of which is given in the following pages. The drama in Malabar sprang into being in 538

---

[1] **Vide my account of the Kaniyans, Vol. I, Chap. XI, pages 190-93.**

173

laden on the backs of mules, asses, bullocks and buffaloes. 796
When once a large caravansary of Kongu laden with such commodities 184
was passing through Chittur, the people of the four [439]
desams of Chittur, *viz.*, Chittur, Nallepilli, Tattamangalam,
and Pattancheri, robbed the Kongans of all their animals and [492]
goods. The chief of Kongu, on receiving the information,
naturally felt indignant, and despatched an ultimatum to the
Pramánakkars of Chittur, demanding the surrender of the animals
and the articles, failing which, it was said, he would
overrun the four *desams*, destroy the houses, and kill all people
even including women and children. On receiving the
ultimatum, the people went to the temple of the Goddess, and
there read the document before the image of the Goddess. It was
so read by a member of the Chittedath house, in whose custody,
it is said, the original document, written in a copper plate, is
still preserved. The reading of the ultimatum, transcribed in
a piece of cadjan, before the Bhagavati, is one of the essential
functions performed on the night of the Kongapada festival
every year, and it is always done by a member of the Chittedath
family, who dresses himself up in the fashion of a Kongan
and acts the part of the Kongu chief. When the document [776]
was read and the people prayed to their Goddess in one voice
for protection, the Goddess commanded from within the temple
that her 'children' need not fear and that when the Kongan
took steps to enforce his ultimatum, she would protect them.
On receiving no reply to the ultimatum, the Kongan mobilized
his men and crossed the Walayar river, the northern boundary
of the Chittur Taluk. The information about the crossing of the [314]
boundary was first carried to the Chitturians by the Izhuvans [273]
of the vicinity, who were up the palmyra trees early in the
morning for the purpose of tapping for toddy, and they in a
body climbed down the trees, and without removing their
breast protecting leather straps, tapping knives, mallets and
ladders, ran to the four *desams* all in excitement. In view [564]
of the above fact, the advance portion of the day procession
of the Kongapada festival is even to this day made up of
a number of persons, mostly of the Chetti caste, belonging to
the four *desams*, dressed up in the full toddy-tapping kit of
the Izhuvans. They do so every year in pursuance of religious [782]
vows made by them for the attainment of particular

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS

(Continued).

564 771 776 Religion. The high caste Nayars profess Hinduism and follow most of the religious practices of the Brahmans whose influence in matters religious as well as social is supreme all over the State. They worship the superior deities of the Hindu pantheon (Siva, Vishnu, and their consorts, as also Ganapati) in *ambalams* or *kshetrams* (temples) of which there are in the State many that have long been in existence. Everywhere in the State, the caste-men and women with their children may be seen going to worship the deities in their local temples both morning and evening after their baths in the [264] public tanks. It is only after this worship that they take their meals, and seldom do they depart from this rule. They also adore the minor deities, namely, Subramanian, Ayyappan, Sástha or Vettakkorumakan, Bhagavati, as well as Kali, the goddess of small-pox, and malignant demons, such as, Kutticháttan, Mundian, Gulikan, Gantákaranan. But these deities [346] or demons are located in *kávus*, mere unpretentious structures with the characteristic tiled roofs and ornamental gables. [532] These deities are represented by carved or uncarved pieces of stone placed on elevated seats beneath the *ál* (Ficus religiosa), the *pala* (Echites scholaris), or the *kánniram* (strychnos), and the priest is usually a non-Vedic Namburi, an Elayad, a Músad, [782] or one of the Sudra castes. The deities such as Subramanian and others above mentioned, are the sons of Siva, and require no animal sacrifices, but the host of demons require to be propitiated with offerings of goats, or fowls, while their wishes are often interpreted by oracles, who are known as *velichapads*.

The Cochin State, as well as Malabar and Travancore, is the land of magic, sorcery, and witchcraft, and as well as

belief in animism, and all these are largely mixed up with the 564
religion of the Nayars. Animism refers to the belief that man 771
passes through life surrounded by a ghastly company of 776
powers, elements, and tendencies, impersonal in character, mere shapeless phantoms of which no image can be made and no idea can be formed. Most of these have departments or spheres of influence of their own—one presides over cholera, another over small-pox, yet another over cattle disease, some dwell in rocks, others haunt trees, and others again haunt rivers, whirlpools
and waterfalls. All of them require to be diligently propitiated [782]
by reason of the ills and calamities which they bring about, and the essence of these practices is magic.

Evidence of a wide-spread belief in the worship of ancestors 769
is to be seen in the kistavens (*thoppi kallús*)—the rock caves containing the sepulchral urns found in the jungles and other parts of the State—in the ceremonies performed and the offerings made for the spirits of the dead. They are worshipped even now in special *kávús*, sometimes even in small out-houses or special rooms in the house on new moon days or *Sankrántis*, and there are also periodical commemorations
on the anniversaries of the ancestor's death. Dead ancestors [532]
are also represented by stones or small images of gold or silver kept in the middle room of the Nayar houses, and offerings of food and drink are made to them on new moon and *Sankránti*
nights. Animistic again is the worship of Káli or Bhagavati 771
who presides over small-pox, cholera, and the thousand maladies 776
that flesh is heir to, the worship of animals and plants [789]
and lastly the belief in exorcism and witchcraft in which [754]
Brahmans also share.

Serpent worship.

Serpent shrines (*Nágattán kávús* or *Nagakóttas*) are to be 771
found in the compounds of every Nayar house 778
in the Cochin State, and their worship occupies
a prominent place in the religious life of the Nayars and 825
other castes. The following mythical origin is ascribed to the adoration of serpents in the Keralólpathi.

The first Aryan colonists settled by Parasurama found Kerala 773
absolutely uninhabitable, and finding it impossible to improve 778
their condition, returned to their old country. After their 825
departure, the Nágas (or serpent gods) of the lower world or [776]
Páthála took possession of the partly reclaimed land and settled

773
778 thereon. The early colonists, on a second venture, finding
825 the land occupied, commenced a war against the Nágas, but
[776] Parasurama acting as arbitrator, decided in favour of the
early colonists, and ordered that they should set apart a corner
of every compound as an abode of the serpent gods. He further
ordained that these allotted places were to remain virgin-ground,
untouched by the blade of the knife or the prong of
the fork, while the under-wood and the creepers were to be
allowed to grow in wild profusion, and to such the name
778 *kávu* (grove) was given. In it are generally planted several
771 stone idols of serpents placed on a stone-basement called
825 *chitrakúdam*, the whole being held sacred and reserved by a
low wall round it to prevent cattle or children straying into
[782] that space. The propitiation of serpents is deemed essential
to the prosperity and well-being of every house-holder, and
[753] periodical offerings are made to them, while the neglect of
[776] these is considered to cause leprosy, sterility, or ophthalmia,
among the members of the family. These serpents are therefore
regarded as tutelary deities of the family, and the gods
along with the shrines are conveyed with the property and
frequently specified in deeds of transfer.

793 The high priest of the serpent cult is the Pámbu Mékkát
795 Nambuthiri, who lives in a house full of cobras which are said
778 to be harmless to his family. Whenever an image of a serpent
825 from a grove has to be removed from one place to another, he
[782] is sent for on the belief that he alone can do it after due propitiation
and offerings, and any tree that is cut down for this
removal must be sent to the local temple to be used as fuel.
[564] The serpent grove should not be polluted by a member of the
[841] low caste, or by a woman during her menses; and when it is
[783] so polluted or otherwise spoiled, a member of the family of
the Nambuthiri priest has to be informed. He gazes into a
[787] vessel filled with oil, points out the evil and suggests the remedy.
The ninth asterism in every month is specially selected for
771 snake worship in Nayar families, when offerings of milk and
778 water are made to them. It is said that the approach of a
825 woman during her menses will cause serpents to vacate the
[841] grove because of the impurity, and Pulluvans are required to
[782] sing songs and perform certain ceremonies to cause them to
[532] re-enter the shrines. Images of these serpents are sometimes

776
attracts a very large number of pilgrims during the *Mandala* 778
púja from Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. This deity is [788]
peculiar to these parts, where he has the largest number of
worshippers.[1]

Demon worship.

The worship of the tutelary deities above described is to a 776
very great extent the outcome of a belief in, 771
and a constant fear of, the influence of demons
and evil spirits on mankind, a belief which has existed from a
very remote period. The worship of demons is confined to the
lower orders and has no connection with the higher forms of
Hinduism, and yet this belief in demons is so wide-spread that
not even the Brahmans are free from it. In every part of the
State, in Malabar and in Travancore, magicians and sorcerers,
from the highest Nambuthiri to the lowest Parayan, find employment in exorcising their baneful influences. Among the
Pánans, Mannáns and Parayans, magic, sorcery, and witchcraft
are a hereditary profession, and among the Nambuthiripáds of
Kallúr, Káttumatam, and Chennamangalam are to be found
special family deities by whose aid they are supposed to avert
the actions of demons and spirits. It is curious to note that [564]
there are exorcists even among Christians and Mussalmans; and [782]
another interesting fact in connection with this is that the high
caste Hindus exercise their magic influence by propitiating, by
the aid of their sacred *mantrams*, the more refined and sublime
manifestations of God, while the low caste-men propitiate Káli
in her more hideous aspects. The ordinary people make a 776
distinction between *Bhútas* on the one hand, and *Prétas* 775
and *Pisáchas* on the other. The former are regarded as the [766]
messenger of Siva and his consort Sakti, while the latter are
the souls of the departed who have died a violent and unnatural death by suicide, murder, or by drowning, and they are
believed to be demons who wander about inflicting injury upon
mankind in various ways. At noon and at midnight are the 775
chief hours when they attempt to seize or possess those who [787]
walk in lonely places or take shelter under tamarind trees or
on the sides of tanks. At night the demons are believed to
call loudly in order to allure people out of their homes into
distant jungles and there to kill them; hence, as a rule, at
night a call is not responded to until it is repeated a fourth

---

[1] **Vide Religion of the Izhuvans, Vol. I, page 313.**

764
[804] is performed. All the members of the family take part in this
ceremony under the direction of the priest who belongs to the
[793] *Āthikurussi* class. The ceremony consists in filling up three
● [564] *para* measures with paddy and one *edangali* of raw rice, and
placing them near the corpse together with a burning lamp of
local manufacture.

[351] A mango tree is cut, and as much fuel as is necessary for
the burning of the dead is collected and placed at the south-eastern corner of the compound which is always set apart for
the burning or burial of the dead. A small pit about the size
of the dead body is dug. Across this are placed three long
stumps of the plantain tree, one at each end and one in the
middle, and on these the foundation of the pyre is laid. The
dead body which is placed on a bamboo bier is carried to the
cremation ground and placed on the pyre with its head to the
south, then fuel is laid over it, together with a little camphor,
613 sandal-wood and ghee, if the family can afford the expense. Be-
764 fore the body is placed on the pyre, the *anandaravan*, the mem-
ber of the family immediately junior to the deceased, tears from
the new cloths laid on the corpse, a piece sufficient to go round
his own loins. He wears it round his waist and holds in his
hand or tucks into his cloth at the waist, a piece of iron,
generally a long key. It must be noted here, that all those
members of the family who are older than the deceased may not
take any part whatsoever in the funeral ceremony or in any
subsequent ceremony after the cremation or burial, but all
adult males junior to the deceased should be present when the
[593] pyre is lighted. The deceased's younger brother, or in his
absence, his nephew (sister's son), sets fire to the pyre
[504] beginning at the head of the corpse; but if a son is left by the
deceased, he sets fire to the pyre beginning at the feet. In the
case of a woman, the son has to set fire to the pyre, or in his
absence, one junior in age to her has the right to do so. It is a
matter of great importance that the whole pyre should burn at
once, and great care towards that end is taken. While the
corpse is being consumed, all the members of the family go and
bathe in a tank (there is always one in the compound of a
Nayar house). The eldest man who has the piece of cloth and
the key carries a pot of water, and all return to the place of
cremation. When the body is almost consumed by fire, the
senior member carries the pot of water thrice round it, letting

[P.97]

CHAPTER V.

THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS)

(Continued).

Occupation.

Among the high caste Nayars, the recognition of caste by occupation is not possible. They were at one time a military caste, and as a relic of it, the small force of infantry maintained by the State is still known by the name of the ancient military caste of Kerala. Aristocratic military leaders of the feudal ages, who then derived their incomes chiefly from landed property, in these times of uninterrupted peace and tranquillity, are but shadows of their former state. Some of them are almost penniless, and while a few families maintain their ancient position, most of them have lost prestige and influence. Among the lower classes of Nayars, there are sub-castes who by occupation were potters, weavers, oil-mongers, and copper-smiths; but the men of these sub-castes have abandoned their traditional occupations, and even consider it a disgrace to be known by their original occupation. This is partly due to the acquisition of wealth by a number of the caste-men, and partly to their attempts to rise in the social scale by engaging themselves in other walks of life. There are again some classes (*Illakkars* or *Sudras*) of Nayars who rendered personal services to the Nambuthiris or to their own community, and the tendency has been to discontinue the services and take to other more respectable calling. 564 178 [555]

The Nayars numbered 1,11,837 at the last Census, and of these, 28,786 are agriculturists. These include tenant farmers, agricultural labourers, growers of special products and those connected with agricultural training and forests. Very few take to manufacture and trade. The sentiments generated by the old feudalism, a rigid conservatism of caste and their residence in rural areas account for it to a great extent. 162 [463] [182]

464 564 [212] The Nayars are the second in the list of the castes as regards learning, and only five per cent. of the population belong to the learned professions, but they are found in all departments of public service. The community is now availing itself largely of the benefits of modern education, and the members are fast becoming conspicuous in every walk of life. In every department of the State, in all the learned professions, they form a respectable majority, and the only people who successfully compete with them are the Brahman immigrants from the other coast. Though there are extensive landholders and substantial farmers among them, a very large majority of the caste-men are really very poor, being either petty farmers, agricultural labourers or day labourers, earning [357] wages at the rate of four to five annas a day. Even women of the poorer classes do agricultural work. Domestic servants in Hindu families are almost wholly Nayars, but none of them are artisans, weavers or potters.

Food.

264 [515] [771] The Nayars seldom eat before their bath or before worshipping in the temple close at hand. Their meals are generally three in number, namely, breakfast which is taken early in the morning, a midday meal between eleven and twelve, and another between seven and eight in the evening, but this meal is generally taken by children between five and six. 262 264 The breakfast usually consists of *kanji* or rice gruel with some pickles and *pappadam* (round wafers made of the meal of the kidney-bean). [272] [556] Coffee is becoming popular among the Nayars, and this beverage is now often taken for breakfast in well-to-do families. They do not recognize any danger in the use of it, and individuals of all ages indulge in it, so much so that it is even given to young infants. The midday meal, which is usually served between eleven and twelve o'clock, consists of boiled rice together with a few vegetable curries; and butter-milk mixed with rice is the last course.

Their supper which usually consists of similar preparation [562] is taken between seven and eight at night. The women take their food after the male members of the family. Only a minority of Nayars are strict vegetarians, though there is no prohibition against their eating meat, fish or fowl.

252 556 [357] In large aristocratic families, Brahman cooks are engaged to prepare the meals, but the serving is in some cases done by the members. In other families, on the contrary, the cooks of

the caste or the grown-up women cook and serve the food to 252 556 the inmates who sit in the dining hall with their own dishes or with plantain leaves placed before them. In ordinary and poor families the cooking and serving are done by women alone.

In grand festivities in which food is served to a large 574 number of the caste-men, the preparations are similar to those 564 ● served at Brahman feasts, a full account of which will be given 252 when I deal with them.

Social status.

The Nayars rank below the Ambalavásis and above the 564 polluting castes. Even among themselves there are various grades of social precedence, and the members of higher sub-castes do not freely mingle with those of the lower. Men of the higher sub-castes may some- [264] times eat with those of the lower, but their women never take their meals with those lower to them in the social scale. It is [574] curious to note that in grand feasts and on ceremonial occa- [796] sions, good many formalities have to be observed in the [576] allocation of seats in the dining hall for guests according to their social status, and any violation of the caste rules or etiquette will end in their abruptly leaving the hall. The touch of the Nayar pollutes the Brahmans, and they themselves in turn are polluted by the touch of the low caste Sudras. The [262] consumption of meat does not entail loss of caste, though many abstain from eating it. They may take or drink water [271] from the wells belonging either to their own caste or the three castes above them. Elayathús are their priests, but sometimes [793] their caste-men also officiate as such, and Nambuthiris give [783] ***punnydham*** (holy water) to the Nayars under pollution. Being in close contact with the Brahmans, they learn to conduct themselves as the Brahmans do, and their morning and evening baths and their worship in temples are as punctual as those of the priestly class.

Dress.

Clothing is of considerable hygienic importance in the life 291 of a nation, and hygiene plays a considerable part in the dress of a Nayar. A piece of cloth, two to two-and-a-half yards long and one-and-a-half yards broad, is worn round the loins. It must touch the ground or very nearly so, and this method of wearing the cloth gives a simplicity and dignity most suitable to their classic features. A small upper garment is also worn while at home A Nayar [293] always carries an umbrella while walking in the sun, but there is no covering for the head.

The Nayar Family in a Disintegrating Matrilineal System[1]

CHIE NAKANE

University of Tokyo, Japan

Introduction

IN this short essay, I will present one case of the disintegration of a Nayar 121
tarwad (matrilineal joint family), based on the materials collected by myself.

The general institutional system of a traditional Nayar *tarwad* is already 613
well known, and has been much discussed recently by anthropologists, including
K. Gough.[2] Here I state it briefly as a preface to the main discussion. A traditional
Nayar *tarwad* was a property group consisting of a matrilineal lineage
exclusively, headed and represented by the senior male member, called *karanavan*.
Normally the members of a *tarwad* formed a distinguishable domestic unit.
Spouses of the members of a *tarwad* resided in the *tarwad* where they were born, [591]
and a husband visited his wife at her *tarwad* at night and returned early morning.[3] [593]
The father had no duty or obligation on his own children, instead, the *karanavan* [429]
was the legal guardian of the offspring of the female members of the *tarwad*.

The Nayars are one of the Hindu upper castes in Kerala, next to the Nambudri 613
Brahman, and traditionally the majority of the Nayars had been land 182
holders or managers, not cultivators. On such a social and economic base, the [564]
function of the *tarwad* had been maintained. Various factors have led to the [471]
disintegration of the *tarwad* system, the major cause of which, I think, was the
economic changes accompanied by modernization since the beginning of the

---

[1] This essay is one of the outcomes of my field work on matrilineal systems in India (1955-56) [114]
carried out by the generous grant of the Elin Wagner Foundation in Sweden, to which
my profound acknowledgement goes. Also I am very thankful for the help of Dr. John [122]
Mogey.

[2] E. Kathleen Gough: "Changing kinship usages in the setting of political and economic [113]
change among the Nayars of Malabar," *J. R. Anthrop. Inst.* 82, pp. 71–87; "A comparison of incest prohibitions and the rules of exogamy in three matrilineal groups of the Marabal," *International Achives of Ethnography*, Vol. XLVI, Part I, 1952, pp. 82–105.

[3] The *karanavan* was an exception: he could take his wife and children in his *tarwad*. In North Malabar, not only the *karanavan*, but also other male members used to take their wives and children to their *tarwad*. However, these wives, including children, had to leave their husband's *tarwad*, as soon as their husband died.

except to cease to function, and to divide the *tarwad* property among individual 613
members. Theoretically the loss of the elements *A*, *B*, *C* and *D* marks the end 182
of the *tarwad* institution. Nevertheless, the *tarwad* is still conceptualized as a
distinctive social and ceremonial group by the element *E*, in spite of the loss
of all other elements.

In 1956 (March-June) when I studied the Nayar, most of the *tarwad* in [114]
Kerala had already ceased to exist as a functional body. In a large building
named *tarwad* where once lived more than fifty members of a matrilineal family, 613
I found only a few members: such as an old mother and her daughter with her
husband and children. The members of each *tarwad* were dispersed, forming 594
independent small households each with a spouse and children, having already 182
partitioned the *tarwad* property. Many of the older generation who are aged
fifty and the head (father) of the household consisting of an elementary family,
were born in a *tarwad*, and had experiences of the *tarwad* life. They are the people
who lived through the dramatic stage of the disintegration of the *tarwad*. Their
life history itself reflects the great changes in the Nayar matrilineal system.

It is extremely interesting to study through these living members the process, 613
by which the members of a *tarwad* organized on a strict matrilineal principle, 182
without allowing cohabitation of husband and wife, gradually reorganized into
many individual elementary families in the course of half a century. The
disintegration of the Nayar system as a whole took about two centuries but it
seems that the actual disintegration of an individual *tarwad* is about half a
century. The following discussion deals with how individual members acted at
various stages of the disintegration of the *tarwad;* and what the changes of the
matrilineal system actually meant to those individuals who are involved; and
what are the consequences of the disintegration of the *tarwad*.

Marayil Tarwad

The *tarwad* which I have chosen for study is named Marayil, and one of the 613
Nayar *tarwad* in Ernaklum, Cochin. This *tarwad* had many advantages for my 121
purposes. The majority of the members of the *tarwad*, who now form many
different households, still reside near each other, within the thirty minutes walk.
The number of the descendants of the foundress of the *tarwad* amounts to 94 [162]
altogether in May 1956, ranging through seven generations. Many *tarwad* were
much bigger in numbers, and deeper in generations, than this. Another advantage 613
is that it represents a *tarwad* of a typical upper middle class among the 564 ●
Nayar caste in this area: present occupations of these members are government
officials, advocates, teachers, etc. They have very friendly relationships with 121
many other Nayars in this area, and are thought of as respectable people. The [628]
husbands, at every generation, are all Nayars, without a single case of a marriage [582]
with a Nambudri Brahman, as is common among the upper class Nayar in this
area, nor with a Irawa, the caste below the Nayar.

Marayil *tarwad* was founded around 1830. The first partition by which the

[text continues on p. 21]

3. THE PEOPLE

161 The new State is one of the most densely populated in the whole of [212] India, as well as one in which the percentage of literacy is highest. Unfortunately no current statistics are available, as Kerala is of very recent creation, but some idea can be gained from the fact that in the Ponani taluk of the former district of Malabar, according to the Madras Government Statistical Atlas, 1935, there were 626,500 inhabitants, or 1,471 per square mile. The rate of increase of the population is also [871] very rapid: about 11% every ten years. The percentage of education is highest in Travancore, Cochin. In 1951, 53.8% were reported literate [212] (*Census of India*, Vol. xii).

114 The people of Kerala are a very complex collection and it would be hopeless to attempt to give a full and detailed description of them. The reader is referred to those works on the subject which have already been published, the titles of some of which can be found in the Bibliography. 105 In order to understand, however, the extraordinary way in which Kerala ● 564 society is partitioned into a number of individual groups, and how each of these has its own particular customs and ways, as for instance polyandry, it is essential to give a general idea of the different castes and subcastes which compose the population, with a brief outline of their social organization and professional occupations.

Rather naturally, as is to be expected from the mythological version of the origins of the country mentioned above, the summit of the hierarchy is occupied by the *Nambudri Brahmin*. As W. Logan very aptly puts it in his *Malabar* (Madras, 1887): "His person is holy; his directions command, his movements are a procession; his meals nectar; he is the holiest of human beings, the representative of God on earth." (p. 127). There are eight subdivisions to the caste, some more holy than others, by reason of the occupations which they pursue. Other Brahmins in Malabar, who have come from outside and are thus somewhat looked down upon, are the Pattars, Embrandiris, Tamil and Konkani Brahmins.

[463] Below this exalted strata of Kerala society come the *Ambalavasis* or temple attendants, of whom there exist roughly nine subdivisions. With [565] them are to be classed the self-styled *Kshattriyas* and the *Samantans*, from whose ranks are drawn the flower of the former military aristocracy. The Malayalam maharajas and rajas all belong to this class, as does the family of the Zamorin of Calicut.

In immediate succession are the *Nayars*, Sudras by caste, descendants of those easterners whom Parasu Raman brought in for the protection

of the Brahmins. There are something like sixty four subdivisions of 105
these people, from those ranking highest, in north Malabar, to the non- 564
military, low caste ones of the south and of the Palghat taluk. Because of their very close relation to the Nambudri Brahmins which I shall describe below in detail, it can hardly be said that the Nayars are equal in caste to Sudras elsewhere in India. This is no doubt the reason for which, not only is their true position in the Hindu caste scale generally overlooked, but also why they themselves have a proud and self-assured bearing quite unlike that of the fourth and lowest caste in other parts of the country.

With the Nayars, the end of the list of caste Hindus is reached. Below come the *outcastes* who, despite their condition, are also graded in accordance with rank. First of these are the Tiyas. These bear different names in the various parts of Kerala, but there seems to be general agreement that they are really all one and the same people. Thus the name Tiya seems reserved for them in north Malabar with the exception perhaps of former north Cochin (Thiyyas); in Palghat, they are known as Iruvans, in south Malabar as Thandans and some as Irava-Panikkars; in south Cochin and north Travancore as Chovans, while in the rest of Travancore they go by the generic name of Iravas (sometimes spelt Izhuvas).

Next are the artisans or Kammalans of which there are properly only [463]
four main subdivisions. Their associates, also artisans and craftsmen, are roughly grouped into fourteen different communities.

The Kammalans are followed by another category composed of farm-
hands, the Cherumas and Pulayas, and a dozen or so different kinds of [563]
aboriginals, jungle and hill folk who are rarely encountered on the coast or in the cultivated area, and have to be sought for in the foothills and jungles of the Western Ghats.

Non-Hindu inhabitants of Kerala include Moslems and Christians, 105
of whom the greater number belong to the first of these two religious 563
communities. They are both known locally as Mappillas, the first as 795
Jonaka Mappillas and the others as Nasrani Mappillas. It is from this name, meaning "mother's son" or "bridegroom" or again "great child", that the more familiar *Mopla* for the Kerala Mohammedans has been coined. All are of the Sunni persuasion, while the Christians belong to a great number of varied denominations; some of them are Roman Catholic (the majority), others "Romo-Syrian" (Uniat), Orthodox Syrian, Malankara Syrian, Assyro-Chaldean (Nestorian), Mar Thomas, and of the Protestant United Church of south India.

105 There is a small community of Jews in Cochin, divided into White,
563 Brown, and Black, the last named being the most numerous. Other
[795] Kerala residents are foreigners such as Canarese, Tamils, Arabs, and Europeans.

105 Untouchability has been made a penal offence by the present Indian
564 Constitution and there is undoubtedly a tendency among the more en-
783 lightened in the country to combat its evils and attempt to eradicate it from modern Hindu society. On the other hand, the religious minded (and there are many) maintain that since the Constitution is a secular one and allows full freedom of religious belief and practice, the legislator cannot interfere in questions of caste and untouchability, as these have to do with the religious law and structure of India. The fact is that, today, untouchability is not what it was, but it cannot be said either that it has been done away with altogether. A visitor to Kerala is certainly immediately made aware of this, as many traditional views on what constitutes intercaste pollution and what does not are still very much in evidence. Thus, although a member of the artisan caste, a
[784] Kammalan, perhaps no longer pollutes those above him in the hierarchy,
[264] atmospherically, at twenty four feet as he used to do, it is nevertheless unthinkable that he should sit down to a meal of cooked rice with a
[463] Nambudri, or even for that matter with a Nayar. The aboriginal Nay-
adis who still live off begging and hunting may possibly "come into
[484] town" now and not have to keep off the roads for fear of polluting other
[784] castes merely by being seen within a distance of seventy four feet, but they are not for that admitted to a would-be reformed Indian community in which no distinctions of caste, creed and colour are made any longer; in fact, they themselves, probably out of some sort of perverse attachment to their powers of polluting, refuse to be rehabilitated – as has been attempted by the former government of Travancore – and prefer to carry on with their traditional way of life.

It can thus be safely said that pollution of the higher castes by the lower is very much believed in and guarded against, even in Kerala
[841] today. Menstruating women, and also those who have given birth, are
[846] still considered to be unclean for a period, varying with the people to whom they belong. And the various kin groups, of which every indiv-
[614] idual is a member among the Hindus of Kerala, will equally be con-
[846] sidered unclean and polluting for a certain amount of days – diminishing
[765] in number in inverse proportion to the height of the caste – after a birth or a death has taken place.

000 Respect towards a superior, towards a god, towards a respected par-

Respect towards a superior, towards a god, towards a respected par-
ent, or towards the higher casteman, was always shown in Kerala by not 105
wearing anything in his presence above the waist, be one man or woman. 564
Basically, this has changed but little, the Nambudri Brahmin always 576
praying in his private temple with only a loin cloth on, the modern Tiya 291
factory girl now removing the blouse which she has taken to wearing
before some important personage of her kin group, so that her breasts
are exposed. What is a less frequent sight nowadays is Nayar, Tiya or
Kammalan women in the streets and on the roads without some cover-
ing over the upper parts of their bodies. Lower caste people, however,
Cherumas, Pulayas and aboriginals, being less affected by progress, are
still to be seen on the highways, their shapely bodies exposed from the
waist upwards.

A striking phenomenon in Kerala is the coexistence, even today, of 104
the two radically opposed systems of *marumakkathayam* (matriliny) and 105
of *makkathayam* (patriliny). In the first, children are born into their 564
mother's caste, while in the other they are born into their father's caste. 619
Inheritance is through the mother's brother in the first instance, and [611]
through the father in the second. The matrilineal people are grouped in [428]
matrilineal clans called *tarawads*, of which the senior male member,
the *karanavan*, is the recognized head; the patrilineal people have patri-
lineal clans called by the same name, *tarawad*, also with the senior male
as the *karanavan*, but at the same time, they observe descent through
the mother, and all are members of matrilineal descent groups known as
illams or *kiriyams*. While castes and, strictly speaking, subcastes are in [613]
principle endogamous, clans and lineages are definitely exogamous, mar- [587]
riage being matrilocal in the case of matrilineal people and patrilocal in [591]
the case of patrilineal people.[1]

Of the high castes, only the Nambudri Brahmins are *makkathayam*. [611]
They have patrilineal *gothras* or lineages which are exogamous, and [613]
patrilineal clans like *tarawads* which they, however, call *illams*. In olden [582]
days, only the eldest son could contract a regular marriage within his
caste, marriage being polygamous and patrilocal. The younger sons 105
were either expected to live as *brahmacharyas* (bachelor religious devo- 564
tees) or could cohabit with Nayar women in a form of union known as [588]
sambandham to which we shall revert in a moment. They were main- [463]
tained by their own efforts (they generally became cooks) and by a [582]
meagre allowance from the family *illam*. This has now been changed by [428]

---

[1] I continue to make use of the terms *matrilocal* and *patrilocal* here, rather than *uxorilocal* and *virilocal* as still being perfectly adequate as they were for Ceylon previously.

105 the Nambudri Act of 1933, the provisions of which are that younger
564 Nambudris may marry women of their own caste and that the *illam*
582 property can be divided, if they so wish, and inherited by these younger
428 sons.

105 Others who observe *makkathayam* in Kerala are the south Malabar
564 and north Cochin Thandans, the Kammalans and their associated fellow
611 artisans and craftsmen, all the agrarian serfs and the aboriginals, the
south Malabar Moslem Moplas, the Christians and the Jews.

Marumakkathayam, on the other hand, is practised by Kshattriyas,
Samantans, Ambalavasis, Nayars, north Malabar Tiyas, south Travancore
Iruvas and north Malabar as well as Laccadive Moplas. In the
[428] case of the Mohammedans, a distinction should be made in matters of
inheritance, family property (that is of the *tarawad*) being handed on
through the female line alone, while self-acquisitions of the father are
[792] passed on directly to his male heirs. A visit to the Makhdun Tangal of
[115] Ponani, the senior Islamic religious authority in Kerala, which I made
on the 24th of November, 1949, allowed me to confirm this. Originally
from the Hedjaz, Sayed Mohammed Ben Mustafa Haidaros told me that
this was an adaptation of Koranic law to the customs of the country and
had been introduced many years back with the coming of his ancestors
to the south-west coast of India.

105 Marriage in Kerala is an arranged affair, parents or a close relative
564 such as the maternal uncle, choosing a suitable partner for the child
[58] after the age of puberty. Once the two families involved have agreed
as to what shall be paid in bride price and in dowry, the wedding is
celebrated publicly with religious rites and with an appropriate display
of festive spending. This is the general rule insofar as marriage within
[588] the caste is concerned. Intercaste relations are, however, far from rare,
and their existence has been regularized and institutionalized in a form
of sexual union, mentioned above, and known as *sambandham*.

105 By this arrangement, which appears to conform to a general principle
564 of hypergamy in Kerala, men of a higher caste are permitted to consort
588 with women of a lower one, without incurring any of the obligations towards
wife and children which they would have if they had been regularly
wed. Greatly facilitating this is the fact that *sambandham* unions
[428] usually take place with women of those people who follow *marumakkathayam*,
for in this way, the offspring which they may have will belong
to their caste and are cared for by and inherit from the maternal uncle.

Sambandham used to be the usual way in which younger Nambudri
sons enjoyed the privilege of taking Nayar women to themselves and

having children by them. The latter were born into the Nayar caste, 105
and to all practical purposes were untouchables for their fathers. But, 564
in fact, Nayars thus procreated were perfectly conscious of the high 588
caste blood which flowed in their veins and which made them only slightly less important than their exalted sires. A feeling of close relation to the Brahmins was thus definitely generated in them, giving them the self-assurance and self-assertion in public affairs that distinguishes them from their fellow Indians to this day. Others, and especially Arabs, have also contracted *sambandham* unions with the Nayar women of Malabar. Such unions are equally possible with *marumakkathayam* Tiya women, and between members of the same endogamous caste, when regular marriage is not possible.

Although it appears to be a very loose way of setting up a household 105
(there is no other ceremony than the possible offering of a piece of cloth 564
by the man to the woman, and the relation can be broken off informally 588
at any time), in actual fact there were, and still are, very few cases of 428
sambandham unions not lasting. The main drawback seems to have been the feeling of frustration in the male partner that he was unable to
do anything for, or leave anything to, his children. British legislation [648]
attempted to remedy this state of affairs by the Malabar Marriage Act IV of 1896 which provided for such unions to be registered and stipulated that when they were, they would be looked upon as regular, legal marriages entitling the "wife" and children to maintenance by the "husband" and father, and to inheritance of half his self-acquired property should he die intestate. Inheritance from father to son in matrilineal families has since been further legalized by the Madras *Marumakkathayam* Act of 1933, but its provisions really apply more specifically to
the regular marriages of the *marumakkathayam* practising people. In [614]
accordance with them, the property of the *tarawads* can now be divided up between the members, if they so wish.

A specific custom of Kerala, which has never failed to intrigue out- 105
siders, is still very much observed today, namely the ceremony of *tali-* 588
kettu-kalyanam, or of the tying of the *tali*. The latter is a small piece of gold, through which a thread has been strung, and which is tied round the neck of a girl before she attains maturity. Speculation as to what is the significance, origin and function of this ritual has been rife over the years, but at least opinions do not seem to differ on the point that it represents some form of symbolic marriage, preceding and perhaps preparing the way for a real one, or for entry into a *sambandham* union.

105 also have to be paid for, if they do not wish to be summarily evicted by
427 a land owner who simply tolerates their settling down on his land. This
is an ordinary lease, like a *verumpattam*, but is called a *kudiyiruppu*.

Tenants were formerly at a great disadvantage vis a vis the *janmi*, as the latter was at liberty to evict them on the slightest pretext. The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930, by protecting the tenant, and restricting the cases in which eviction is possible (such as the non-payment of rent for instance, or necessity for the land owner to have some land to cultivate himself), especially of the *kanamdar*, has made this a thing of the
[423] past. Dissatisfaction with the existing conditions of land ownership and
land-tenure continues, however, and the present tendency goes so far as
[464] to want to protect the interests of the *verumpattam* tenants to the detriment of the *kanamdars* and *janmis* and even, in the last resort as we shall see, of the landless, agrarian labourers who constitute the vast army of the Kerala agrarian proletariat.

105 It is difficult to generalize about the distribution of agricultural roles
423 and interests among the various castes and communities in the state.
●564 Schematically, it can be said, however, that generally Nambudri Brahmins are *janmis*, since, as mythology has it, Parasu Raman gave them the land in perpetual enjoyment. Commenting on this, one of my interpreters assured me that this was not mere idle belief. It was a fact, giving the Brahmins an unequivocal title to the land, in spite of there being "no legal document" confirming them in their ownership. Many Nayars, including Kshattriyas such as the rajas of Cochin and Travancore, Samantans such as the Zamorin, and some Tiyas and Moplas, are also owners of large tracts of land.

105 *Kanamdars* are usually recruited among the well-to-do Nayars and
564 Tiyas, but also among the big Mopla families. Other Moslems are
[427] *verumpattam* tenants, as are the majority of the Tiyas. These of course
[273] used to follow their traditional profession of *toddy* (fermented palm
[963] juice) tapping, but with the introduction of prohibition in the former Madras State, they have had to give it up, and mainly hire themselves
[464] out as labourers. Others who have always hired themselves out in this way, as an immemorial caste occupation, are the Cherumas and Pulayas, some free, but the vast majority tied to the land. Many Moplas, also, have no other means of subsistance.

105 The aboriginals in Kerala continue their wild life of beggars, food-
563 gatherers or primitive forest-clearers and agriculturalists. Some are ad-
463 dicted to witchcraft as are also members of some of the artisan castes,
754 and their activities give Kerala a strange, mysterious atmosphere of imponderable evil, the reputation of which is great outside its boundaries.

ponderable evil, the reputation of which is great outside its boundaries. 000

5. POLYANDRY IN KERALA

During my stay in Kerala, I found that the following castes practise 595
polyandry in the state: Nayars, Thandans, and Tiyas (Thiyyas) of north 564
Cochin, Kammalans such as Tathans (goldsmiths), Karuwans, or 463
Perinkollam (blacksmiths), Asaris (carpenters) and Puri-asaris (laterite-cutters), Musaris (bell-metal smiths of braziers); also the allied castes to these of Kolla-kurups (shampooers, masseurs, and leather-shield makers) and Vil-kurups(bow-makers), Tol-kollans (leather workers), Kanisans (astrologers), Mannans (washermen and barbers), Panans (exorcists and
umbrella-makers), Pulluvans (herbalists and *nag* worship songsters). All [611]
follow *makkathayam* except the Nayars, who are *marumakkathayam*
from one end of Kerala to the other.

Today, Nayars in Kerala are said, as we have seen (p. 92), to have 595
ceased the practice of polyandry. Not only do they say so themselves, 177
but other castes are emphatic on this point as well. Since, with the dis- [701]
appearance of the petty chieftains, Nayar militias no longer exist, the
customs that were closely linked to these organizations have also faded
away. The Mysore invasions perhaps had something to do with it, too,
for Tipu Sultan was grimly determined to eradicate the Nayar armies [175]
and made this his principal objective. In 1788, before invading Malabar, in a proclamation which was intended, among other things, to be a warning to the people, he said: "... and since it is the practice with you for one woman to associate with ten men, and you leave your mothers and sisters unconstrained in their obscene practices, and are thence all born in adultery; and are more shameless in your connections than the beasts in the fields: I hereby require you to forsake these sinful practices and to be like the rest of mankind; and if you are disobedient to these commands, I have made repeated vows to honour the whole of you with Islam." (quoted by C. A. Innes, I.C.S. in *Malabar and Anjengo*, Madras
District Gazeteers, p. 72). Many of the Moplas today, especially inland,
are descendants of Nayars whom Tipu thus did "honour with Islam". [797]
They were forcibly circumcized and regaled with beef. Many, however,
reconverted themselves later, but lost caste in the process and were [564]
never considered the same again.

In spite of it being said that Nayars are no longer polyandrous in 595
Kerala, I was able to find, as I shall show further on, some families left

The polyandry of the Kammalans, of the four sub-castes of goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters and bell-metal smiths, is in every way identical with that of the Thandans and Tiyas of the central area. This may be because they claim a common Sinhalese origin for it. The legend relates that one of the early Perumal kings of Kerala, having received some useful hints as to how to have his washing done by a *dhobi* (washerman) promised to give him a girl of the Asari (carpenter) caste in marriage. This revolted the Kammalans, and in order to avoid the degrading proposition, they emigrated in a body to Ceylon, leaving their king with none but a few workmen specialized in making roofs for the temples. The pre-historic boycott had its desired effect. The Perumal monarch, in dire distress, promised to give up the marriage he had had in mind and appealed to the king of Ceylon for the return of his indispensable artisans. These agreed to come back, but were given protection by the king of Sinhala in the form of an escort of his own subjects who brought the coconut with them, settled in Kerala and became the ancestors of the Tiyas. Presumably, the Kammalans learned the advantages of polyandry when they were in the kingdom of Kandy, and have never ceased to practise it since. 595 173 [564] [326]

I found all the artisan families which I visited polyandrous, and I was told that the custom is still very vigorous, in spite of what outsiders have to say. The same applies to those associated craftsmen castes, the Kolla- and Vil-Kurups, the Tol-kollan, Kanisans, Mannans, Panans and Pulluvans, who do not seem either to have given up polyandry in any great numbers. Their form of the institution differs in no way from that of their fellows of the senior caste. 595 564

B. POLYANDRY IN THE WALLUVANAD TALUK OF SOUTH MALABAR AND IN NORTH COCHIN

Personal Observations

It was into this complex maze of Kerala society that I ventured, a few years ago now, to study the polyandry of some of its people. In the following pages, I give the results of this personal investigation. Thanks to my helpers and interpreters, I was able to find polyandrous households almost immediately. My first visit to the Palghat taluk and to Walluvanad allowed me to confirm that the Tiyas still practised what I was searching for, and that what I had heard about them was not incorrect. While in Tellicherry, I had the same experience, even though 595*

Tiyas

well as the unmarried women and girls lived in the house. The women 595*
who had married out had left and were living with the families of their 591
husbands. What struck me was the considerable number of unmarried [589]
boys and girls relatively advanced in age who were still at home. Tiyas, I [582]
was told, marry late, usually after puberty, which is exceptional in India.

It will be noticed that polyandry was only practised in the elder generations. 595*
Not a single case occurs among the younger people. The
reason for this is that the Thiyya Makkathayam Act of 1940 made polyandry [656]
illegal in Cochin, and nobody was thus at liberty to marry in this
way any longer. Property, which was undivided so far, would be divided, [428]
Velu told us, when he and his brothers and his wife had died.
This was in accordance with the new legislation, and all the children, girls included, would have a share. The boys, however, would be allotted double portions. Thus for their children by the two marriages, if the girls were not married by then, there would be thirteen shares, of which the boys would get the four first.

Velu assured me that formerly they were polyandrous in his caste so 595*
that the property should not be divided up. It kept the brothers together, 178
they did not get involved in the quarrels of their wives, it was not necessary to split up into separate families, and thus was a very good system. Times, however, had changed, he said and now because there was a law forbidding polyandry, there was no longer any reason to keep what they owned undivided. He seemed to think that the old way of doing things had its advantages, especially in the possibility of bringing in another woman, if this were desirable and the brothers agreed to it (as he and his younger brothers had done), without being obliged to separate and start splinter households as had now become necessary. When I questioned him as to how they would keep going now that the economy of an undivided polyandrous household was no longer possible, he replied that it would oblige them to turn coolies, cut laterite, plough for others, carry on petty trade and emigrate to the towns.

On the 2nd of November 1949, I went again to Cochin accompanied 595*
by an interpreter. We drove into the Tallapilli taluk of the northern part [103]
of that state, and visited a village near Kunnamkulam, called Perumpillav
(big jack fruit tree). The people living here called themselves [101]
"Ezhuvas", but, in accordance with recent Cochin legislation, they were [564]
assimilated to Tiyas or Thiyyas as the local spelling has it. (Article 5, paragraph i of the Thiyya *Makkathayam* Act of 1940 states that "Thiyya included *Ezhuva*, Chova, Billava, Marayan, Thandan and others recognized as such.")

Thandans
Kammalans

*595 so, but that they would not tell me. He was twenty five when he took
60 his fathers' sisters' daughter, Janeki, to be his wife.

582 I found Kali difficult to interview. She was old, very old by Indian
*595 and Kerala standards, and quite plainly showed her displeasure at being
601 bothered. Consequently I went over to asking Paragnoden for the in-
115 formation that I wanted, but he seemed extraordinarily ignorant and lazy. Finally, it was from a neighbour who was called in, that most of what I learned was gathered. It is from what these combined informants told me, and from what my guide and interpreter knew about the family, that I was able to piece the genealogy together. It will be found in Tables 9 and 10 herewith. I have been obliged to put it on two tables because of the size of the first generation.

*595 On Table 9, Vali and Lakshmi are shown. Now deceased, they were
601 sisters of the five brothers. They live to be fifty and fifty three respectively. Personal names and *tarawad* names were not always known by the informants, and in these cases, I have been obliged to put in interrogation marks – except where a *tarawad* is qualified as being one from the village of Palappuram, for this at least gives a geographical location.
582 It is to be noted in Table 9 how advanced in age[2] are some of the un-
732 married young people, but then Thandans do marry late in Kerala, differing in this from other parts of India. The congenital idiot, Narayan, son of Paragnoden, was at his father's side during the interview.

*595 This completed my general study of Thandan and Tiya (Thiyya) polyandry. However, before this date occurred, I had already started visiting Kammalan houses to find out what the polyandry of this caste of artisans was like.

On the 12th of November, 1949, I went to Lakkidi in the Walluvanad taluk, near the borders of Palghat taluk, to interview the Tiyas I had seen there ten years before. I was accompanied by two interpreters and a guide. We were not successful in finding the Tiya family we sought, as it had moved elsewhere in the intervening years, but we found a blacksmith living on the same bit of property, as I have already reported
*595 earlier (see p. 178). Before I give an account of this family's polyandry,
● 564 however, I would like to describe that of a household of goldsmiths,
[326] living close by, as, hierarchally, these craftsmen come before their fellow blacksmiths in the Kammalan caste.

In the language of Kerala, Malayalam, they are called *Tatham* (see p. 173) and they are among those who are said to have gone to Ceylon
[361] in the days of the Perumals. They are not a wealthy group of people, and this became apparent at once when we entered their compound near

[2] [i.e. 22, 20, 12 & 10 yrs. old -- Analyst]

[text continues on p. 194]

*595 the cross-roads of the main Shoranur-Palghat highway of the road to
•564 Lakkidi, a few furlongs down the latter, on the right hand side. In contrast
[361] to the Thandan houses to which we had been, although not to the
Tiya (Thiyya) houses of the Cochin labourers, the place looked rather
[342] miserable. It was a thatched palm-leaf house, standing on a red laterite
loam platform, in the middle of some paddy fields. There were signs
[241] about that these Tathans were not only goldsmiths but that they now
[231] also practised agriculture. There was paddy lying about to dry in heaps
in the yard, and there were stalls for bullocks at the back.

*595 We interviewed a man called Raman and his brother Kochen, aged
[601] fifty four and fifty two respectively, who lived polyandrously with their
wife, Kurumba, forty five years old. They seemed rather impressed by
us, and were reluctant to speak. They observed the outward forms of
[574] hospitality, however, and presented us with fresh coconuts for us to
drink the milk.

Raman told us that the household's name was Padijarehil, meaning
"Western", and that it was part of five others which constituted the
[611] Uzhugaparekil *tarawad*. The latter was *makkathayam*, as we expected,
[614] and exogamous, as was also their *kiriyam*, although, here too, they only
observed the rule in matters which concerned those members of it whom
*595 they knew. They had two and a half acres of paddy fields, in simple
427 *verumpattam* lease from a Nambudri Brahmin janmi called Kodierthamana.
243 For this they paid five rupees a year and handed in a part of the
harvest – five hundred *parahs*, I have in my notes, three hundred from
the *kanni* crop and two hundred from the *magaram*.[1] As it was an ordinary
verumpattam, there was no renewal fee. They had a deficit this
year of forty *parahs* (roughly lbs. 866⅔) and they were wondering what
they could do to make it good. Last year they had done "other work"
[464] (presumably such as hiring themselves out as labourers) in order to
raise the cash needed to compensate for the deficiency in grain, and
*595 they might do the same thing now. When I asked them what kind of
[326] goldsmith's work they did, they laughed and said that they had given
[436] this up; how could they carry on with their traditional profession, they
asked, when the sovereign which was once worth Rs. 25 had reached
Rs. 77?

[601] Raman and Kochen had had eleven children in their polyandrous

---

[804] [1] This again seems too much. It is equivalent to lbs. 10,830 (1Palghat *parah* = 10 *edengallis* = 40 *nalis* (1 *nali* = *tolas* 21⅔ in s. Walluvanad and Palghat) = 866,40 *tolas*; as 40 *tolas* = 1 lb. in s. Malabar, 1 *parah* = 866,40 : 40 = 21⅔ lbs and 500 = lbs 10,830).

union with Kurumba. They were not the only ones following the custom 595
in the family, as their sister, Paru, now dead, had also had two 601
husbands, the brothers Aiyappan and Narayan of the Vetukatukundu
tarawad. She had died in childbirth, when her little boy was born; the
child died too. Nilu, their youngest sister, had also died giving birth to
a boy, her first-born, who did not survive either. Of what Narayani,
the next youngest sister, had died, was not clear, but it had been after
she had given birth to a little girl who was still alive. Of their children,
the eldest, a boy called Kunju, and his sister, the eldest but one and [582]
bearing the name of Kunji, had married a brother and sister of a neighbouring
tarawad called Putanparekil; there had been no marriage between
cross-cousins. They did, however, say that this was the best form
of union, as the Thandans had said. The genealogy of the family is
given in Table 11.

I have described how, previously, we went into the other compound, 595*
where the Tiyas of 1939 used to live, to question the family of blacksmiths 564●
about their polyandry. This sub-caste of the Kammalans is called 326
Karuwan or *Perinkollan* and they, too, are not a wealthy class. These
lived only a few years from the Thatan household just described, and
their dwelling was very similar to the other. The yard of the thatched [351]
house had blacksmith's instruments lying about it, which showed at once
who lived there.

We met and interviewed a man called Ittenam, aged fifty five, whose 595*
brother, Poreyn, with whom he used to share a common wife, Paru, 601
was now dead. He was a widower, and lived with his sons, Raman and
Kunyuni, twenty two and twenty years old, who were present at our
talk. Their common wife, Nani, twenty, was also there, a little baby boy
on her hip, and the two other women with her were her sister-in-law,
Narayani, twenty four, who was the wife of both her brothers and also
the sister of her two husbands, and Kunji, the thirty six year old elder
sister of Narayani, Raman and Kunyuni. A picture of her is given in
Fig. 12; she was here on a visit, as her household was elsewhere. All
the women, except Kunji, were bare-breasted, and, when they were not [853]
suckling the babies on their hips, milk ran down onto their abdomens
from their naked breasts. Itteenam's elder sister, Unuli, was alive, aged
sixty one, but she was married and had her home elsewhere with her
husband, Narayan.

When I made the genealogy of this household, I found that its name
was Mudrikkelparampil. The *tarawad* was similarly named and was exogamous [614]
together with the *kiriyam*, as was to be expected. *Makka-*

[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 197]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AW11 Kerala AW11
Kammalans

thayam was followed and caste, or rather sub-caste, endogamy. There 595*
was more polyandry in the second generation of this family than in any 601
other encountered so far. I found that Kunji was married to two hus- [614]
bands; Lakshmi, aged thirty three, to four husbands; Paru, thirty, to
two husbands; Sita, twenty eight, to three husbands; and Narayani, al-
ready mentioned, to two husbands. All the respective husbands were
brothers, and only fraternal polyandry was practised. The women had [582]
all married early: Kunji and Yakshmi at sixteen, Paru at fifteen, Sita a
bit later at twenty four, and Narayani, the youngest, at eighteen. The
reason for which Sita had married later was that she had been taken by
the three younger husbands of her elder sister Lakshmi, after seventeen
years of marriage with the latter. Only Kanju, the eldest, had remained
with Lakshmi, and Raman, Narayan and Krishna had decided to marry
Sita jointly, when they found that she was not getting married and
showed no inclination to do so outside. The two younger brothers of [582]
the Mudrikkelparampil household, Raman and Kunyuni, were eighteen
and sixteen when they took Nani to wife; she was now twenty. Poly-
andry certainly did not look as if it were dying out in the blacksmith's
caste, judging, at least, from this striking example.

The property upon which the family lived was worth four thousand 595*
rupees. It consisted of the house, some agricultural implements and a 435
paddy field. The people were tenants of the Nambudri Brahmin *janmi* 427
Kodierthamana, and paid him the rent of a customary *verumpattam*
nine rupees yearly, plus a renewal fee of thrice the rent every twelve
years. Poreyn and Kunyuni were practising smiths, hence the imple- 595*
ments we had seen on coming in, and Raman worked at the Metal In-
dustries Ltd. in Shoranur, where we camped. They also cultivated the [326]
paddy field to produce some of the rice they needed themselves, al- [243]
thought the yield was not very great. The genealogy is given in Table 12. [433]

On the 15th of November, 1949, together with interpreter and guide, 595*
I visited a family belonging to the third sub-caste of the Kamma- 564●
lans, that of the carpenters or *Asari* (often pronounced *Ashari*). I heard [335]
that laterite-cutters called *Puri-asari* or "mud carpenters" were assimi- [333]
lated to these people, but that they only constituted a division of the sub-
caste. They are also reputed to be polyandrous; I did no have an op-
portunity, however, to verify this myself.

The *Asari* whom I saw that day, lived at Palappuram, a village on the 595*
main Shoranur-Palghat road, some few miles east of Ottappalam. The 342
compound of the house was by the side of the road on the right, just [361]
beyond the village, coming from the west. It was a very poor looking

[Text continues on p 199]

construction made of woven palm leaves and thatched, and we interviewed 595*
two men: Raman, aged fifty seven, and his eldest son, Kutikrishnan, [342]
who was thirty five. The name of the household and *tarawad* was [614]
Perinkulam.

Kutikrishnan told us that he had two fathers, Raman, who was with 595*
us that day, and Shangu, a younger one, aged fifty five, who was absent. 601
All his fathers' sisters, and there had been three of them, had died in
infancy. His mother was called Lakshmi and was fifty; I was unable to
ascertain the name of the *tarawad* from which she came. Kutikrishnan's
wife bore the same name as his mother and he had had three boys and
a girl by her. Only the daughter was alive, as the sons had all died of [165]
what he described as "convulsions".

I asked why, if the fathers had been polyandrous, the second generation 595*
was not so too. Informant 1 attributed it to times having changed 178
and "civilization spreading". By this he meant that people did not wear [302]
their hair tied in the typical Kerala top-knot on one side of the forehead
any longer and had also taken to growing moustaches; he said, too, that
it was the women now who objected to having more than one husband.
In some marriage agreements, it was specified, he said, that the daughter [675]
of the house would only be given to one man. It was particularly in
wealthy families that this was taking place, because they could afford it.
Raman, informant 2, when consulted as to what he thought of these new
ways, said that they were bad, but what could be done about them? In
olden days, it was always said that polyandry was good because: "Where
four breasts cannot agree, two heads can", meaning that the women
cannot live in peace together while the men can. Nowadays, the young
people did not seem to understand this, and the result was that property
was split up between sons and life made harder for them.

When I came to make out the genealogy of the family, I found that in 595*
spite of all this talk about new-fangled ways, Amini, Kutikrishnan's 601
sister was married polyandrously to three brothers of a *tarawad* called Warode. It was significant, however, that both informants disclaimed any knowledge of the names of the brothers of the elder husband, Narayan. Later, I heard that although Madhavan, a younger brother of informant 1, aged eighteeen, had not been publicly married to his sister-in-law, Lakshmi, he was known to share her with his brother in the old, traditional polyandrous way. The genealogy is given in Table 13.

The carpenter sub-caste of the Kammalans, Raman told us, have exogamous 564
tarawads and *kiriyams*. They too, while observing the rule 619
strictly for the *makkathayam tarawad*, are not so careful about it in the 582

[Text continues on p. 201]

kiriyam; in that matrilineal descent group they limit themselves to not 564●
marrying those of their acquaintances whom they know belong to it. 614
The sub-caste is also endogamous, carpenter only marrying "carpen- [582]
tress", and never a *Puri-asari*. Normally,[1] boys alone can inherit the [428]
property, but if there are no male heirs, the girls, even if they are married, will inherit equal shares.

The members of the Perinkulam household were subtenants of a 427
Nayar tenant called Mutad Achutah Nayar, himself the *verumpattamdar* of a Nayar *janmi* from Kavalappaia near Shoranur called Kavalappaia Mupil Nayar. As *kudiyiruppu* tenants of the site where the house was built, they paid a yearly rent of only one rupee.

On the 17th of November, 1949, I visited the house of a member of 595*
the fourth and last sub-caste of the Kammalans, the *Musari* (often pro- [564]
nounced *Mushari*), bell-metal (an alloy of lead and brass) smiths or [326]
braziers. It was near Lakkidi in the Walluvanad taluk, one furlong north of the main road, and to reach it, my interpreters and I followed a very attractive path, sunk deep between high banks of earth and overshadowed with coconut and arecanut palm trees.

We arrived at a miserable house, standing in a grove of palms and [351]
plantains, a red laterite courtyard in front, in which could be seen some stone moulds in grooves – no doubt the foundry. There was nobody about, but when we called out, a little girl (whom we later heard was called Menakhi) appeared and said that she would go and fetch her father. He arrived soon afterwards, a big, strong man, fifty years old,
called Krishnan. He wore his hair over his forehead in the typical [302]
Malayalam top knot, and he had a very ugly face.

The name of the household, he told us, was Puawutterparamba and 595*
it belonged to the Chelamanaparamba *tarawad*. Our informant was the 601
youngest brother of three, and there was a sister called Kali, aged forty nine, about whom, however, he could tell us nothing at all. The whole family used to live, it seemed, at a place called Nedungothani, near Palappuram. That was their village, he said. But then, the elder brother, Konnan, now sixty five years old, had got married some thirty years ago to a woman named Sita whom he had met while "roaming about". He had married late as a result of this proclivity for wandering away from home, and, with his bride, aged fifty today (Krishnan could not tell us the name of her *tarawad*), he had moved to Wallancheri, near Kutipuram, Pattambi, because he had found business bad in Nedungothani. He was still living in Wallancheri and had five children, of whom four were married, the two daughters away to men of other vil-

[1] [i.e. in the carpenter sub-caste of the Kammalans -- Analyst]

*595 601 lages. Here again, the informant was unable to give us *tarawad* names, and indeed this was most characteristic of the whole interview. He gave [644] village names instead, saying that they used these now in his caste.

● [564] After Konnan had left, their father and their mother's brother got Kunyikai, his elder brother aged sixty two today, and himself married to Kunyu, a young girl fifteen years old at the time, from the Kerikell *tarawad* in Cochin state, resident very close to Lakkidi on the other side of the Ponani river, only about a mile away. That was twenty five years ago, and Kunyu was now forty years old. Very soon, Kunyikai found it impossible to live in this polyandrous atmosphere (Krishnan [584] would give no details), and asked their maternal uncle to get him another wife. Their father had died in the meantime, and their mother's brother was thus the only person who could do this for him. He found Chiru for Kunyikai, and they were wed two years after the former marriage.

All the members of the family never lived together, however, because as soon as the wedding had taken place, Krishnan and the former common wife, took their part of the property (which was not much) and moved to this place near Lakkidi, where they established themselves. They chose it because it was so close to the wife's relatives. All the children they now had were Krishnan's, as Kunyu did not have any for five years after the polyandrous marriage. Krishnan, the eldest boy, now twenty, was born three years after the shift of residence. Kunyikai stayed behind in the family home, and was still there at the time of the interview. He had one boy called Kunju, aged twelve. Of the children of Krishnan and Kunyu, only the second, a daughter called Kalyany, and aged eighteen, was married. She became the wife of two brothers, Raman and Chami, of Ambalapara village, at the age of fifteen. She had one child, a boy called Paru, one year old. The genealogy which I established from this information is given in Table 14.

614 564 I was very surprised to find the informant so ignorant of the *tarawad* names – although he did know that of his own *tarawad*. He assured me that village names had now taken their place and that, in his caste, they [582] observed what might be called "village exogamy". Did this mean that the bellmetal smith's patrilineal clans coincided with topographical units such as villages? There was, it seemed to me, a possibility of this being so, although I could get no confirmation of the hypothesis from anybody, not even from my interpreters and guides. The *Musari* observed [582] exogamy also in their *kiriyams*, Krishnan said, although, as in the case of other castes which I have previously described, they only did so for 428 564 those of the group whom they knew. Inheritance was *makkathayam*,

[Text continues on p. 204]

Kammalans
Kolla-kurups

428 564 and boys had preference over girls in this matter, but the latter could inherit if there were no male heirs.

429 The plot of land upon which the house was built was leased to the family as a sort of *kudiyiruppu*. It cannot be called a fully orthodox one, since Krishnan said that he had paid fifty rupees to the former resident, a coolie of the Ertachan caste (low caste Nayar), twenty three years ago when he took over from him, and another fifty rupees to the *janmi*, a Nambudri Brahmin called Manjalata Nambudri. Since then, rent had been fixed at eight annas and six pies a year, but he had not paid it for the last two years, he said, because nobody had asked him to do so! He made his living all right as a brazier, although it was not a very lucrative profession.

*595 564 Having been to polyandrous families of the four sub-castes of the Kammalans, I next went on to investigate the polyandry of their associated artisan sub-castes, of which six were reliably reported to practise it. [305] [182] I began with the *Kolla-kurups* or shampooers, masseurs and leather shield makers. To these are assimilated also the *Vil-kurups* or bow makers, but I did not have the opportunity to see any. There are a subdivision of the main sub-caste, on the basis of speciality, as the *Puri-asari* are of the regular *Asari*.

361 On the 20th of November, 1949, I went to the house of a *Kolla-kurup* near Palappuram. This town is on the main Shoranur-Palghat road, east of Ottappalam, just before reaching the cross-roads of Lakkidi. 342 [487] We left the car on the highway, and proceeded on foot to the south of it, along a narrow, winding path which took us past luscious, green paddy fields lined with coconut trees, to a largish house, built of clay and laterite but thatched in the usual way, standing on an elevated [351] piece of ground, like a platform. There was a gate to pass through, and as we went in we saw members of the family sitting about on a kind of rough, dried-clay verandah running round the walls of the building.

*595 There were quite a lot of them, and they were all very gay and noisy. They started singing at the sight of us, and, laughing and shouting, made a considerable fuss of us. The contrast to the rather dismal atmosphere of the other houses that we had visited was very marked. After my guides and interpreters had somewhat quietened the children, we managed to speak to a man called Shankaran, aged thirty six, who was the eldest living male member of the family's second generation. With him were his wife and children, as well as his twenty five year old sister, [291] Kalyany. None of the people wore anything from the waist upwards, and only a piece of cotton cloth covered the lower part of their bodies.

[Text continues on P. 206]

Kolla-Kurups

614 564 The name of the household was Palappuram *Kalarikel*. Intrigued that it should have the same name as the neighbouring town, and that a new word instead of *tarawad* should be used, I enquired how this had come about. I was told that the *Kolla-kurups* did not have patrilineal clans of the usual Kerala pattern because they were too few and far apart; instead, they used the name *kalarikel*, which is that of a Nayar armoury for training soldiers, or a "gymnasium". This is in accordance with their profession as masseurs, and in order to distinguish them from each other, they qualified them with the name of the town or village in [428] which they were situated. Otherwise, the same rules of marriage as in the rest of the artisan caste were enforced: the *kalarikels* were patrilineal and exogamous, and inheritance was *makkathayam*. There were also *kiriyams* or matrilineal descent groups in which exogamy was observed; Shankaran was even able to give me the name of his, Pal, which meant "white", he told me. I was struck by the resemblance between the *kalarikel* system of the *Kolla-kurups* and that of the "villages" of the *Musaris* whom I had encountered three days before (see p. 202). It was as though this instance of something different from the more usual *tarawads* had acted as a transition between these and the *kalarikels* of the *Kurups* today.

*595 601 I made the family's genealogy, which is given here in Table 15. Shankaran had had two fathers, Raman and Karapan, both dead now, aged fifty four and forty two respectively. His mother was called Kunji, and was still alive, aged seventy. His fathers had had a sister, who died when she was thirty, called Paru and who had married a certain Krishnan of another *kalarikel*, at Malleshamangalam. There had been no issue from the marriage. Of his own generation, only he himself and his sister, Kalyany, were still alive. His eldest sister, Kunyiama, who had been married to two brothers, Kutan and Shanghuni of a *kalarikel* at Paratipullivil, had died when she was forty; her offspring included two boys, one of whom was married, and a girl, married polyandrously to two brothers, Balan and Bhaskar of Chunangad *kalarikel*. Kalyany had two husbands also, Kunyuni and Velu, but I did not manage to record these men's *kalarikel*. (I took a photograph of Kalyany standing [126] at the entrance gate of the compound, with the paddy fields at the back, and another one of the family sitting round Kunji, the informant's twelve year old daughter, and listening to her singing a song; see Figs. 11 and 13.)

*595 427 465 The house in which they all lived (except Kalyany who was only here on a visit to her brother, and lived elsewhere with her husbands), stood on land belonging to a *janmi* called Kollapuri Nayar. They did not pay

Holla-kurups
Tol-kollans
Kanisans

any rent for it, but on the contrary, received payment as shampooers 595* and masseurs of their landlord. Fees for those services were, on an 465 average, twelve annas per session, and they received the money at regu- [427] lar intervals from seven to fourteen or twenty one days. Four times a year (every "season"), they were also entitled to two bags of rice, food, oil for massage and a bath(?). (I am not quite clear as to what the latter item stands for, but this is what I have in my notes.)

On the 26th of November, 1949, I visited a *Tol-kollan* household, at 564 ● Meitenadesam, near Ottappalam. The name of this sub-caste means [282] literally "skin-workers", and its members are leather-workers and cobblers. The house in which this family lived was the most miserable of [342] all those we had or were still to see. It stood in the coconut groves on [361] the outskirts of Ottappalam, and we went there on foot. It was a broken down construction of woven palm leaves and mud walls and the thatch on the roof was in bad condition. An old lady called Kurumba (see [304] Fig. 14), sat just outside the front door, bare breasted and with enlarged holes in the lobes of her ears so that she could accomodate the sizeable gold lumps which are inserted here in Malayalam fashion. With her [574] was her elderly daughter, Kunji, who received us. She was very polite and insisted on offering us some fresh coconut milk.

When we asked her about polyandry, she scoffed at the idea and said 595* that in her family at least, the practice had been given up already in the 564 generation of her father and mother. The men quarrelled too much about the common wife, she said, and besides, the women resented it and did not want it any more. There were members of her sub-caste who were still polyandrous, but as they were few and far between it would not be easy to locate them.

Under the circumstances, it seemed useless to make out a genealogy of these people, and I did not have time to look for a polyandrous *Tol-kollan* family elsewhere.

From this house, in the evening of the same day and with the same 564 interpreters and guides, I went on to the home of some *Kanisans* or [191] astrologers, who are also known as *Panikkars* locally. Theirs was a [361] better dwelling, standing hidden in a thick grove of plantains and coconut trees well shaded and pleasant. We were received by a man called [574] Ramankuti, thirty five years old, who offered us some chairs to sit on [115] and very readily answered our questions.

He told us that his household bore the name of Pellarmangalam, and 564 that his *kalarikel* was similarly called. It appeared that *Kanisans* do not 614 have *tarawads* either, and that their patrilineal clans are called "gymna-

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW11 Kerala AW11

Kanisans
Manans

564 614 [428] siums" too – for what reason, I could not find out; I could see no relation between astrology and a gymnasium. Like the *Kolla-kurups*, they also had *kiriyams* which were exogamous as the *kalarikels* were; the informant's matrilineal clan was called Manga. Inheritance was *makkathayam*.

* 595 601 The family living in the house here, was divided into two sections. The first, of which Ramankuti was the eldest, consisted of himself and his brother, Ticheri, three years younger than him. Their father, who was now dead, had successively had two wives, Lakshmi and Kalyany, both of them still alive and living in the house; the first section was descendant from the first wife, while the other was issued from the second. Kalyany had had six children, of which, Paru, aged thirty, was the eldest; there were four brothers, Pachu, Shanghuni, Kumaran and Gopalkrishnan, and a younger daughter called Nani, aged twelve. The interesting part of the organization was that the two sections had both contracted polyandrous marriages: Ramankuti and Ticheri with one wife, Madhevi aged twenty eight: their four half brothers with Devaki, twenty three years old. Both women were from other *kalarikels*, the first from Kangal and the other from Kavalapara. They all lived in the same house, however, with Nani, only Paru having married Krishnan of Kutiparli *kalarikel* and having gone off to live with him. Paru had three children with Krishnan, as did Madhevi with the informant and his brother. The four brothers had only one little daughter, aged one year, with Devaki. The genealogy, as it was dictated to me, is given in Table 16.

* 595 [791] [427] Ramankuti told me that he and Pachu were the fully-fledged astrologers of the family. Kumaran and Gopalkrishnan were studying the art. Ticheri did odd jobs as a labourer, and Shanghuni was employed as a workman in the local match factory. The house that they all lived in was rented on a *kudiviruppu* lease for which they paid eight annas a year to the *janmi* of the land upon which it stood, a Nambudri Brahmin called Totapai Mana Nilakanda Nambudripad.

564 [296] [305] [535] On the 22nd of November, 1949, I went to Lakkidi to visit the house of a *Manan*. These people are washermen and barbers, and they play an important role in Kerala as it is they and they alone who can wash the polluted clothes of menstruating Nambudri Brahmin and Nayar women. But they are also dancers in the temple on festive occasions.

361 351 We found the house for which we were looking, in the actual village of Lakkidi, in the vicinity of the railway station, near the river. It was a moderately large, well-to-do building, standing isolated in a large compound, in which clothes had been laid out to dry on the ground.

[Text continues on p. 210]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AW11 Kerala AW11
Manans
Panans

first moved to Mangode village, where Kali came from, for eleven years. 595*
Today they were living at Managhat, where Erechen had found it easier 601
to get work.

As Kunji, my aged informant, was getting tired, we now took on
Krishnan, son of the late Krishnan by his second wife, Kunji (the repeti- [115]
tion of the same names in a family in Kerala is very confusing). He [551]
helped us to check all this material and to correct some inaccuracies
which had crept in. I noticed that in some cases it was impossible to 614
obtain the name of the *tarawad*, and that the name of the village would 564
be given instead. There were, however, no *kalarikels* with the Manans,
I was told. The patrilineal clans were exogamous, as were also the [582]
matrilineal *kiriyams* of these people, although they were not very well
known and practically neglected in present-day marriages. Inheritance [428]
was *makkathayam*, as expected, but I could get no confirmation of the
reported four endogamous subdivisions described in the *Gazeteer of the
Malabar and Anjengo Districts*, p. 130 (see Bibliography).

This Manan family was living on ground belonging to a Nambudri 564
Brahmin *janmi* called Mangala Mana C.M.C. Narayana Nambudripad, 420
but they did not pay him any rent. They were there more as his em- 465
ployees and, in exchange for dwelling space, rendered him the invaluable services which he needed from them as washermen and barbers.

In the afternoon of the same day of the 25th of November, 1949, 564
upon which I had visited a Thandan household (see above, p. 189), I 791
went to Palappuram to see the family of a *Panan* (exorcist and leaf [293]
umbrella maker).

They lived in a poor but neat and cleanly house, situated in a rather 595*
thickly overgrown grove of the usual Kerala vegetation. On the veran-
dah of the modest building of dried cow-dung and mud, a bare breasted [342]
woman, Sita, aged forty five, and three boys awaited us. She received us nicely and spoke quite readily. She seemed resigned to her poverty and conditions and only complained to us that she was not able to give the boys more and proper food.

She told us that she lived with the surviving husband of a once poly- 595*
androus union, in which she had been married when she was eighteen 601
to two brothers, Panju, who had died two years after the wedding, at
twenty one, and Korappan, her present forty four year old husband.
She had had a daughter, Kunji, within the first year of her marriage,
and four boys afterwards with Korappan. All the children, including
the twenty six year old eldest girl, were unmarried; she was still breast-
feeding the youngest, two and a half year old Kumaran. This, as I 853

853 could see, was obviously a way of circumventing the difficulty of adequate nourishment, something to which a great majority of the mothers in the vast multitudes of Asia habitually resort.

*595 [868] [126] Father Korappan was away working, and he had taken twelve year old Krishna with him as an apprentice, so I was not able to photograph the whole family. But I obtained a picture of Sita with Kumaran at her breast and Chami and Narayan sitting next to her, which I give here in Fig. 15. The genealogy is in Table 18.

●564 614 [428] Where *tarawads* were not known, Sita gave me the name of the village. From what she told me, the clans were patrilineal, inheritance was *makkathayam*, and exogamy was the rule, also in the *kiriyams*. Her husband's matrilineal descent group was called Walleananad. The house
*595 [429] was leased as a *kudiyiruppu* for which they paid a yearly rent of twelve annas to the *janmi*, Eranur Mana Narayan Nambudripad. They had been fifteen years at this place, and had come from about a furlong away where they used to reside before. This awakened my curiosity, and I enquired how this had happened.

Sita told me that her husbands originally lived in the other house, because it was the *tarawad's* headquarters. The name Kundilpadam which it bore meant "low field", and Vellarkaden which was the name of their present house, was just the appellation by which their new dwelling was known. Her husbands' father was the youngest of a pair of brothers, and they had both taken wives to themselves and had not lived in polyandry. Their offspring, her husbands and their father's elder brother's children, had continued to live together, and they, Panju and Korappan, had married first, twenty seven years ago. Then, twelve years later, the cousins had also got married, and, in order to make place for them, Sita and her surviving husband, Korappan, being the junior members, had moved away to another residence, the one where they lived at present.

[601] I made the genealogy of the neighbouring household as the informant gave it to me. It is shown here in Table 19. Two brothers, Panju and Raman, respectively aged forty six and forty, lived polyandrously with a common wife called Cherona, thirty three years old. They had four children, of whom none were married, since they were still too young.

361 On the 21st of November, 1949, I went to Palarmanpalam, a cluster of houses on the road between Ottappalam and the Lakkidi railway station, about a mile before the latter is reached. The object of our
564 759 771 visit was to see a *Pulluvan* household, that is of herbalists and *nag* snake worshippers, a sub-caste associated to the artisans.

[Text continues on p. 214]

Pulluvans

*595 We found the house, which was a small one, in a grove of plantains,
[361] surrounded by tapioca fields. A man named Komon, aged twenty nine, met us and took us onto the neat verandah of the building which was constructed in the usual Kerala style. He told us that the name of his household was Putanpunakkil, meaning "new house", and I made out the genealogy of his family, as shown here in Table 20.

*595 His elder brother, Raman, aged thirty three, had died recently, he
601 said. He had had two younger sisters too, Chimdevi and Narayani, both of whom were also dead, the eldest at fifteen and the youngest at twelve. He and his elder brother had been married first polyandrously to a woman called Kalyany, for four years. Their father had found her for them, from the village of Churumudacheri. They had had a daughter by her, Ittiyadi, who was now eleven.

Kalyany, it seemed, had never really settled down in polyandry, and had always said that she did not like having two husbands. She wanted to stay alone with the eldest, Raman, but the latter did not accept. As he persisted in this attitude, in spite of her insistence that she have him all to herself, she eventually ran away, back to her parents' home, leaving the daughter with the brothers. That was seven years ago, and their father had immediately provided them with another wife, Kunji, from Manar village. She was twenty at the time, and had been married earlier, at the age of fourteen, to two brothers, Velu and Aiyappan of Tirumatankodu village. She did not get on with these two men and wanted to leave them. When Komon's father chose her for him and his brother, she left her married home, and the men, quite exceptionally, allowed her to take away the boy they had had with her, called Paramesuram and who was now aged ten. Kunji herself was now twenty seven years old and she had had three children with her new husbands, two boys and a girl. I could see that she was expecting another child shortly (in two months time, they told me).

564 There appeared to be no *tarawads* with these people, and village
614 names were used instead for the patrilineal clans, which were exoga-
428 mous. There were *kiriyams*, also exogamous, and inheritance was *mak-*
kathayam. The sub-caste was reputed to allow marriage of brothers and
564 sisters; the Gazeteer mentions this on p. 133. When I asked Komon
582 about it, he protested that it was calumny and that they had never done
588 such a thing. In my opinion, the reputation wrongly based on insuf-
114 ficient evidence, comes from the fact that these people form a very small group and those persons who are of the same generation use classificatory kinship terms which are apt to make it appear that "sister" mar-

[Text continues on p. 216]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Pulluvans

564
582 ries "brother" but which really refer to someone of another village and
588 *kiriyam*.[1]

114 The Putanpumakkil house stood on ground belonging to a Nayar
427 *janmi*, cousin of the former Secretary of the States Ministry in New
Delhi, Sri V. P. Menon, called Wuppala Shankara Narayana Menon.
They paid a *kudiyiruppu* rent of one *fanan* (annas four and pies six)
yearly. They made their miserable living from plying their traditional
534 trade. To give me a sample of their musical abilities, they offered me
a concert on the instruments which they used; those included the famous
Pulluva-kudam, a sort of stringed instrument cum drum; but I am afraid
that the effect was not pleasing to my ears.

169 While carrying out these investigations among polyandrous house-
569 holds in the Walluvanad taluk, I endeavoured to obtain statistics con-
cerning the proportions of the sexes of the two principal polyandrous
castes studied, the Thandans and the Kammalans, but they were unob-
[115] tainable. The Tahsildar of the Walluvanad taluk, on instruction from
the Collector of Malabar, however, sent me the following letter:

"Tuluk Office, Walluvanad
Perintalmanna, Dt. 9-12-49

Sir,
Statistics of certain populations
Called for – Furnished.
Collector's Ref. W-4-1450/49 dated 4-12-49

As ordered by the Collector's reference cited, the statistics of Izhuvas and Kammalans are not available in the Census records available in this office. The figures now furnished are approximate and are based on local enquiries made by me and my subordinates.

	Male	Female
Thandans (Izuvans) /	5100	6100
Kammalans (Karuvans, Thattan, Musari & Assari)	2600	3100

signed
? Menon
Tahsildar
9.12.49"

---

[1] Iyer, in *The Cochin Tribes and Castes* (Vol. I, p. 148, 1909 ed., see Bibliography), says that, with the Pulluvans "nor can a woman allow herself to conjugal servitude to more than one". In view of the above evidence, this pronouncement does not appear to be correct.

Thandans

association. That was why Shankara and they themselves later had 595*
sought and obtained wives of their own; mainly because the women "did
not look after them", "did not satisfy them sexually". In principle, a
common wife should not refuse herself to any one of her husbands,
Panju said, but as in all things, excuses and evasions were easy to find,
and the result was that the arrangement did not always work out satisfactorily for some. Nowadays, women had becomes most immoral, the 837
informant complained; they were not at all chaste and had numerous
extra-marital relations, in defiance of what was expected of them in the
homes into which they had been married.

From here we were led to discuss jealousy. Did it exist among them? 595*
And if it did, how did they control it to make polyandry function? I 578
was assured, of course, that it existed; had I not noticed how many 152
polyandrous households were breaking up because of quarrelling? Their
members quarrelled because there was rivalry among the men, jealousy
of each other and a desire to be the sole possessor of the common wife.
Panju agreed that, although there was no jealousy between himself and
Narayana, both of them being liked equally by Nani who distributed
her favours evenly to both of them, there had been much strife and
unpleasantness in the days when they were married to Kuniyama with
their elder brothers (they were too young for that in their first union
with Devaki). That was why they had wanted a wife to themselves and
obtained Nani from their maternal uncle. They got on with each other
and liked working together, hence there was no jealousy between them
and their polyandrous marriage functioned well.

Thandans are, as we have seen, *makkathayam*, and because of this 851
the status of the children is perfectly clear: they are legally the offspring 564
of their fathers and take their family name while inheriting the property 428
from them at their death. They are also, of course, their mother's legal
sons and daughters, but they do not carry on her lineage nor inherit
from her brother as they would do, for instance, in a north Malabar
Tiya *marumakkathayam* union.

With regard to paternity, the children belong to all the fathers collectively, and not to any particular one of them. They are never assigned 595* 851
to the elder father, as is sometimes the case with polyandrous peoples
in other parts of the world. I asked both Panju and Nani if they knew
who was the father of their different sons, and both of them told me
that they "did not care" and that they had "no preference". I insisted
that they could perhaps try to remember what had happened and who
was the woman's partner at the probable date of conception, to calcu-

told me that they knew of no instances. They nevertheless seemed alive 597 to such a possibility and readily gave me the above information as theoretically feasible.

Divorce was a stumbling block to my questioning, and I found it dif- 586 ficult to get a clear picture of it from the informants. That divorce does exist, there seemed to be no doubt in their minds. The woman was returned to her parents' house with what remained of her dowry, and a piece of cloth which was handed to her father and mother, if they were alive, or to her brothers if the former were dead. The intention of divorce had to be declared publicly before representatives of both the wife's and the husbands' families. The bride-price could be claimed, but this is not often done any longer. What happened if a woman wish- 586 ed to divorce rather than the men, was a possibility which they did not 564● seem to be able to visualize. When I asked about it, Panju said it did not happen, and women did not take this initiative. I mentioned the case of the Pulluvan family which I had visited on the 21st of November, and in which Kalyany had not accepted the polyandrous marriage with two brothers and had eventually left them to go back home to her parents (see p. 214). But both Panju and his brother said that this was another caste, and that such things "did not happen with Thandans".

Panju was surprised at the idea which I put to him that, if one of the 595* husbands in a polyandrous household wished to break away and set up 586 another home for himself with a woman of his choice, divorce from the common wife might be necessary. He insisted that all he had to do was to obtain the consent of his brothers, or, if he needed the help of his mother's brother to get new wife for him, this uncle's approval of his plan. This was not "divorce", he insisted, since the common wife remained in the family with the elder brother or brothers. His outlook appeared to stem, it seemed to me, from the polyandrous concept of the household constituted as such. The common wife was married to the household rather than to the individual men, and even if one of them broke away, the union between the principal and herself was not affected. There could thus be no "divorce", the term being reserved for the break-up of the latter marriage, which would be a much more serious occurrence.

But what then of the property? If the deserting husband took a portion of it away for himself, did that not make it look more like a divorce from the wife shared in common? And what about the children? With whom did they remain in the case of a real divorce, such as we had first spoken about?

864 were definitely separated from each other, but they were already themselves shy in each other's presence, and tended to keep apart. I was surprised to hear the informant mention so long a period of latency, beginning too so early, but of course, what she said should not be taken too literally, there being a strong possibility that she was either mistaken or that she was giving me the information which she thought I would like to hear. She was also the sole source of what I learned in these matters, and I did not have an opportunity to check up on what I heard with any other woman. Still, I find what she told me to be worth mentioning, because it may be that, after all, children in Kerala do have a relatively longer period of latency than was to be expected in such a community.

836 124 564 [177] I enquired about pre-nuptial sexual relations, but the informants, Nani and Panju, assured me that no such things existed. On the contraty, they said, virginity was very highly praised, not only in a girl but also in a boy. Here again, I have my doubts as to the accuracy of this reply, suspecting a knowledge of European ideals in such matters, especially those of the Victorian era. Since much that is British in India today still reflects this period, this may have influenced them to give me such an answer. It was added, however, that other, higher castes, such as Nayars, had no such prejudices, and because of this I have wondered if the information did not take the form that it did out of a desire to praise Thandans and show them up in a favourable light in comparison with Nayars. It was probably a combination of both that prompted them to take this attitude: they wanted to make out that their caste conformed to European standards in what concerned pre-marital sexual relations and was therefore superior to that of the Nayars, their immediate rivals.

833 564 I enquired privately, one day, what was the position adopted in coitus by this community. I was told that, contrary to what happened in higher castes where the man lay below the woman, with Thandans the man was always above. The contrary "was not favourable to the procreation of warriors", a strange remark I thought, considering that it was the Nayars who, in olden days, constituted the martial class. I had already heard about this particular way in which some castes in Malabar were reputed to have sexual intercourse, when I was working with the Todas in the Nilgiris during the summer of 1949. I will be giving an account of it in the chapter about these people.

838 564 177 The only point which my interpreter was willing to concede to the higher castes was that they were less inclined to homosexuality than the

838 Thandans. With the latter, a lot of men were known for their proclivi-
564 ties of this sort, and they were nearly as bad as the Moplas, I was told.
177 The latter were very much addicted to sodomy, but then it was part of
their culture, and had been acquired with Islam from the Arabs.

833 There was no impotence or frigidity in Kerala, not with any caste, I
564 heard. People were far from "cold" and passion, rather, was the rule. I was given a long description of the consummate art with which the higher castes indulged in amorous pleasures and assured that the lower castes had only learned from them. It seemed, however, that the Thandans could never hope to excel in these matters, especially the women who were still far from being the "angels" which those of their superiors undoubtedly were.

674 Asked about crime, neurosis, and insanity, my interpreters said that, to their knowledge, there was little of these in the area. As only recently, since my arrival in Shoranur, a Thandan woman had assassinated her husband, I remarked on the circumstance and asked them how they reconciled it to their statement. They replied that it was an exceptional
event, and that for a long time previously, nothing of the sort had hap-
[181] pened. People, on the whole, were docile and not aggressive. They did
not even indulge in poisoning, which occurred quite frequently in other
158 parts of the country. Again, insanity seemed to be restricted to the
755 Moplas, who, apart from occasionally running amok as is well known,
had members of their community frequently tied up in a mosque or to iron stakes, in the hope that they could thus be cured.

D. POLYANDRY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERALA

177 Unquestionably, polyandry no longer thrives as it did in Kerala and
[595] research into what changes have brought about this situation over the
last two hundred years cannot fail to be of interest. I myself, having returned to the area after an absence of ten years, was able to notice many alterations, although these were not sufficient to warrant any
[114] specific consideration. Dr A. Aiyappan, Superintendent, Government
Museum, Madras, has made a particular study of the Irava community, and in his publications on this subject, and on the more special aspect of polyandry in other castes of Malabar, has shown what factors are involved and how foreign contact has undermined the old culture and is
bringing a new one into existence. Readers are referred to his books
[127] and articles listed in the Bibliography. I give here a brief outline of his

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW11 Kerala AW11

177 but then this influence made itself felt rather by conversions and per-
797 sonal dealings than by any direct, government action, as now.

Transport, which in Kerala had always been difficult, was also greatly
177 changed. Modern facilities, such as good roads, ferries, bridges; later,
489 motor cars, railways, engine-driven ships, boats and launches; and finally, aeroplanes, have put thousands of boatmen and cartmen out of work and have not only brought formerly isolated and inaccessible parts of the country into contact with the rest, but have also made important centres become within easy and rapid reach of each other. As in other
564 parts of the world where it is impossible for race distinctions to be observed in a system of general transport, caste is overlooked in public transport in Kerala, and this fact has greatly contributed to breaking down traditional socio-religious pre-occupations in such matters.

With the institution of a regular method of dispensing justice through
177 courts, caste was dealt a further blow; the European masters of India
564 refused to treat individuals otherwise than as equals before the law. The
693 judiciary personnel was recruited from all sections of the population, regardless of caste or creed. This measure, together with the new way in which government servants were enlisted, gave the more enlightened castes of Nayars and Tiyas their chance. The present eminence in public affairs which these two communities have attained is in a large measure due to the opportunities thus thrown open to them.

Education, of course, also had a lot to do with it. Instead of the old
177 kind in which village teachers taught native lore and traditions in an
871 unchanging, ageless fashion, European-type schools were opened and modern means of education became available to all who wished to take advantage of them. These methods may be criticised today, since independance in 1947, as being un-Indian and useless in the context of the national culture, but the fact remains that they brought great changes in the outlook of the people, especially among the middle classes, who have indisputably benefitted from them.

Liberal, learned professions began to be followed by many to whom
177 such careers were not open before, and again, regardless of caste dis-
463 tinctions, lawyers, doctors and teachers appeared in large numbers in
564 Kerala. Many of them soon travelled to other parts of India, where their reputation as able and knowledgeable practitioners has never ceased to grow. A large part of the Government of India's New Delhi office personnel is made up of men from Kerala, in both high and subordinate positions, especially Nayars, so much so, indeed, that the fact has become the subject of a standing joke.

"Europeanism" further enhanced its influence in Malabar with the 177
introduction of new industries and capitalistic enterprise. The coconut, 438
cashew nut and coir industries employ thousands today and have created
amongst the people an even greater dependence on the fluctuations
of world prices than in the days of the pepper trade. Weaving, tile factories
(such as the one founded by the Basel Mission), saw-mills, match
factories and metal industries have given many people a new outlook
on life which they could never have had in the old days, and has profoundly
changed their traditional concepts. Prohibition introduced by [656]
the Congress Party Government, with its consequent forbidding of the [293]
ancient profession of toddy tapping, has thrown many Tiyas out of [564]
work, obliging them to seek their livelihood elsewhere, and modifying
for this reason the traditional structure of their economy and family life.

Greater and better medical facilities, as well as a growth in industrial 177
productivity, have brought about a correspondingly sharp rise in the 433
population, so much so, indeed, that today Kerala ranks first in density [161]
to the square mile out of the whole of India. Agricultural prosperity
has unfortunately not kept pace with this advance, making it often difficult
for everyone to obtain food, especially when the monsoon fails,
as it often does in the latter part of the year. Foodstuffs, especially [439]
grain, have thus to be imported from outside, and when this is not [464]
sufficient, many seek work in other parts of the world, leaving their [167]
families for years at a time, to emigrate and hire themselves out as
labourers in Ceylon, Singapore, and the Malay Federation.

It is not surprising, under the circumstances, that the old order in 177
Kerala has crumbled. Of the rajas and maharajas of old, none are any 631
longer in positions of responsibility, those of Cochin and Travancore
having also been made destitute by the recent re-arrangement of States
in India. The Nambudri Brahmins are, perhaps, those who, because of 177
their priestly character, continue more than anyone else, to lead the 564
ancient, traditional life. Many of them, however, have gone in for the [491]
new enterprises, and if they do not always themselves own and direct
them, they have invested funds in them. The younger members of the
illams appear to be increasingly dissatisfied with their lot, and do not
seem prepared to accept the old imperatives of occupation and succession.
It may not, after all be just a coincidence that the Communist [665]
Party Government now in power in Kerala is headed by a Nambudri
Brahmin.

The Nayar caste is no doubt the one that has been the hardest hit
by the sweeping changes brought about by altered conditions. But its

177 564 members have been the ablest of all in adapting themselves and in taking advantage of the new opportunities which the Europeans brought. To them have gone the best and most rewarding jobs both in and out of the administration, positions of trust and responsibility to which their long training as soldiers and managers of the upper castes in Kerala had possibly prepared them. I was astonished to find how many well-known names in present-day India still have their homes and families in Ottappalam of the Walluvanad taluk.

It has already been said how very much the Tiyas, everywhere in Kerala, have progressed, and how they, too, have taken enormous advantage of changed circumstances, especially education, to become today one of the most progressive communities in the State. Aiyappan's book is witness to this. Perhaps only the lower castes, such as Kammalans, other artisans, Cherumas, Pulayas, aboriginals and the poorer section of the Mopla Islamic community, have remained as they always were, and have shown no signs of taking advantage of the benefits brought in by foreign rule. It is not to be excluded, however, that it may be precisely for them that the new Communist government will legislate, especially for the landless agricultural labourers – but it is too early to say anything about this yet.[1]

177 564 595 Following closely upon the replacement of the old order by a new one, polyandry, too, has crumbled in Kerala. The Nayars, whose non-fraternal polyandrous customs so forcibly struck the early Portuguese and other European travellers, have ceased to practise polyandry, at least in the pristine form in which it was described by the ancient writers. Since this polyandry appears to have been closely correlated with the military organization of the Sudra militiamen of the local rajas and chieftains, it was perhaps to be expected that, when the latter disappeared, the custom of non-fraternal polyandrous marriage went with [928] it. Particularly as men living in a *marumakkathayam* system of inheritance seem to suffer greatly from the fact that they can leave nothing to their children, but only to those of their sisters. In a conversation that I had with His Highness the Maharaja of Cochin, at Ernakulam on the 18th of April, 1949, he told me that it was "un-natural" for a man not to be able to provide for his own children, and that, in his opinion, the custom could not survive much longer for this reason.

---

[423] [427] [1] A step has been taken in this direction with *The Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill 1957* which introduces comprehensive land reforms, including the right of "permanent tenants" to purchase land held by them, a ceiling on land holdings and fixation of fair rents.

There appears to be no doubt that Thandans and Tiyas (Thiyyas) of 177
the central area are gradually giving up polyandry. Others have report- 564
ed on the speed with which it is disappearing, sometimes exaggerating 595
the rapidity, it seems to me, but nevertheless correctly stating that not many more years will pass before the custom has become simply a memory, as it is with the Nayars. I think a distinction should be made, however, between the more wealthy, upper members of the caste and the lower, poorer ones. In fact, polyandry with the Thandans and Tiyas is being abandoned from the top, and this observation is valid not only for their community, but also for polyandry in general in Kerala.

It is the upper castes, who have had greater opportunity to educate themselves, adapt themselves to higher standards and lead a more modern, Europeanized type of life, who are giving it up as something primitive and unworthy of self-respecting citizens. Within the castes, however, it is not always the upper strata that has progressed in this way, as can be seen with the Nayars, where polyandry is reputed to be practised still in the conservative court circles of Cochin and Travancore. Among the Thandans and Tiyans it is the other way round, the upper class either professes not to follow the custom any longer or really abstains from doing so. The Kammalans and associated artisans nearly all continue to be polyandrous, and as they are without exception people of very slender means, a distinction such as the one made here does not apply.

Aiyappan, discussing new trends in the Irava community, has written: 177
"Differences in occupations and income and the development of new 595
sexual standards are two active forces that one sees in operation against 463
polyandry." (*Iravas and Culture Change*, p. 103.) Iravas, according to him, had formerly very few avocations from which to choose. They pooled their resources and worked for the house, their common wife and their children, without making any individual reservations. Today, matters have changed and the men each want a different type of work, chosen from among the numerous new occupations which are open to them, and aspire to have their own family, wife and children. The old 177
ways are no longer fashionable, and are even despised and considered 595
to be primitive and barbarous. Jealousy thus reappears, and asserts (157)
itself in no uncertain way. The women, too, do not want to be shared any longer by a number of brothers, and prefer to return home or refuse polyandrous marriages rather than be joined in wedlock in the traditional manner. In North Cochin, however, it was the progress of the people in higher levels of the Thiyya caste that brought about a legal inter-

177 diction of polyandry. (For a synopsis of the Act of 1940, see p. 238 ff.)

595 While travelling round with my guides and interpreters in 1949, I had ample opportunity to hear what the polyandrous families were thinking about the ancient form of matrimony which was beginning to be despised. Here are some of the remarks which were made to me in the course of my interviews:

177 564 595 Raman, the informant of the Appayl Wattakkeh household, said that if only twenty five per cent of two hundred and fifty Thandan families in the Walluvanad taluk still practised polyandry today, it was because the Moplas, Nayars and Brahmins ridiculed the practice as low-caste and primitive. The Thandans wanted to reform themselves and aspired to higher things, therefore they had to give up polyandry as representing something backward.

Velu, informant of the Kereghetil household of the Katukulangara *tarawad*, told me that as long as the property was undivided, they practised polyandry, as it kept them from having many wives in whose quarrels they might become involved and thus break with each other. But now, as each man wanted to go his way, things were different, and polyandry was no longer possible.

It will be remembered that, on the 2nd of November, 1949, I attempted to visit a rich Tiya household near Kunnamkulam in north Cochin, only to be put off by an old man, accompanied by a younger one, who assured me that no one was polyandrous in their family any more. When I went on to a poor labourer's house nearby, I was told that this was not true. There were three brothers in the older generation (one of whom was the elder of the two men to whom we had spoken) and they lived in polyandry, although, being wealthy, they did not like to admit it.

In the Kaladiwalapil household, that of the miserable Tiya labourers next door, in the village of Perumpillav, the informant, Raman, said that the ancient custom by which brothers shared a common wife, and thus avoided the quarrelling among sisters-in-law in which they feared to become embroiled, was changing now because the younger people found it "more convenient" to be monogamous. When I asked him what he meant exactly by this phrase, he replied that "times have changed" and that it is "easier" thus. Not yet satisfied, I insisted on more clarification, whereupon I heard that polyandry is "not done any longer", that it was "out of fashion", and not "modern". Raman was unable to express himself better, and seemed plainly puzzled and embarrassed by my request for a more precise explanation.

I obtained the same kind of answer from Panju of the Appayl Wat- 177
takkeh household, it will be recalled, when I asked him how it was that 564
his maternal uncle consented to get a new wife for him and his brother, 595
Narayana, when they refused to live any longer in polyandry with
Raman and Kuniyama. He said that his mother's brother had certainly
begun by resisting the request, but that, in the end, he had given in
because "times have changed" and he could not very well force them to
remain in their present marriage if they said that they were dissatisfied
with it.

It was Panju, too, who gave me the unexpected information that it was "immorality" that was breaking up polyandrous households. Women were not at all chaste any longer, he said, and anybody could have them "for a song". So every man now wanted a wife of his own whom he could control, instead of submitting himself to the old discipline and consenting to remain without complaint in the old polyandrous type of union.

My experience with Kammalans and other artisan castes was different. Polyandry with them is also threatened, but it cannot be said
that it has deteriorated to the same extent with them as it has with the
higher castes. Jealousy, however, seems to be coming very much to the [578]
surface, and I heard many tales of serious quarrelling among the men, [152]
leading to separation and to division into splinter households.

Raman, the *Asari* informant of the Perinkulam household, interviewed at Palappuram, said that polyandry was dying out because "Civilization is spreading". When I asked him what he meant by "civilization", he answered, rather simply, that people did not tie up their hair any longer in the typical Malayalam way, a top knot in front over the forehead, and that many had taken to growing moustaches. He added, however, to these very personal criteria of his, that women refused now to be wedded to many men; some wealthier people, he revealed, even go so far as to insert a clause into the marriage contract by which it is stipulated that their daughter will not be given in marriage to more than one man. He concluded by sighing, shrugging his shoulders and exclaiming that it was not right, but what could be done about it?

Kunji, the daughter of old Kurumba of the *Tolkolan* Palakaparampil household near Meitenadeshan, also complained of too much quarrelling among the men of a polyandrous family, and said that because of this, the women did not want to be married in this way any longer. She attributed to these reasons the fact that her household had already given up polyandry in the previous generation.

177 595 Because of the profound cultural changes which have fundamentally modified the social and economic structure of Kerala society, it can be said that polyandry is on the decline in that part of the world. Circumstances no longer favour the marriage of many men to one woman, and the custom is not only being abandoned as useless, but those who, by tradition, should follow it, look upon it with abhorrence and with growing disgust. To those who have practised it so long, as something good and moral, it has become, nowadays, something barbarous, primitive an unworthy of them: times have changed and it simply is not done any longer.

ADDENDUM

671 *Act XVII of 1115, the Cochin Makkathayam Thiyya Act, passed by His Highness the Maharaja of Cochin on the 18th day of Kumbham 1115, corresponding to the 1st day of March 1940.*

C.V. Iyyu, former Member of the legislative Assembly of Cochin State, told me on the 27th of October, 1949, that he was on the Commission which in 1937-38 drafted the Cochin *Makkathayam* Thiyya Act of 1940. The majority of the members of the Commission were Tiyas (Thiyyas) and the initiative of the enactment was due to V. K. Krishnan Kutti, M.L.A., *wakil* of Trichur, himself a Tiya. The Act is thus a Tiya legislative reform and not a foreign one. This would explain the fact that it is observed. I hear that the idea is a result of the education and progress of the Tiya community, which now ranks as one of the most accomplished in Kerala.

Some of the main provisions of the Act are given here below. They are those that concern definition of the name Thiyya, of an heir's sex in doubtful cases, acceptable forms of the marriage solemnity, prohibition of polyandry (art. 12), succession both testamentary and intestate:

Chapter I. Five articles.

101 564 428 Art. 5, (i): "Thiyya includes Ezhuva, Chova, Billava, Marayan, Thandan and others recognized as such." It adds: "When owing to any physical defect or deformity, it is not possible to ascertain the sex of any of the heirs of an intestate, such heirs shall, for the purpose of this Act, be regarded as female."

Chapter II. Marriage and its Dissolution. Thirteen articles.

585 Art. 6: "Conjugal union may be openly solemnized in any of the following ways:

a) by the tying of the Mangalya Sutram
b) by the presentation of cloth to the female by the male
c) by exchange of rings
d) by mutual garlanding, and

snake-bite, the Nāyādis wear a brass toe-ring. And, when 600
engaged in catching rats in their holes, they wear round the wrist a snake-shaped metal ring, to render them safe against snakes which may be concealed in the hole.

The Nāyādis who live within the jurisdiction of the Kavalapāra Nāyar near Shoranūr wear the kuḍumi (front lock of hair), as there are no Māppillas (Muhammadans) to molest them. The Kavalapara Nāyar was at one time an important chief, and directed all Nambutiri jenmis (landlords) who held land within his jurisdiction to bind themselves not to let the land to Māppillas. Nāyādis of other parts are not allowed by the Māppillas to wear the kudumi, and, if they do so, they are taken for Parayans and professional sorcerers, and beaten.

Some Nayādis have become converts to Christianity, others to Muhammadanism, and maintain themselves by begging for alms from Muhammadans. They are called Thoppyitta (cap-wearing) Nāyādis.

The priest of the Nāyādis is called Mūppan. His appointment is hereditary, and he enquires into all matters affecting the community, and can excommunicate a guilty person.[*]

Average height, 155 cm.; nasal index, 86. 101

Nāyar.—"The Nāyars," Mr. H. A. Stuart writes,[†] 564
"are a Dravidian caste, or rather a community, for we 463
find several distinct elements with totally different occupations among the people who call themselves by this title. The original Nāyars were undoubtedly a military [174]
body, holding lands and serving as a militia, but the [701]
present Nāyar caste includes persons who, by hereditary

---

[*] This note is based mainly on articles by Mr. S. Appadorai Aiyar and Mr. L. K. Anantha Krishna Aiyar.

[†] Madras Census Report, 1891.

101 occupation, are traders, artisans, oilmongers, palanquin-
174 bearers, and even barbers and washermen. The fact
● 564 seems to be that successive waves of immigration brought
[701] from the Canarese and Tamil countries different castes
[463] and different tribes; and these, settling down in the
country, adopted the customs and manners, and assumed
the caste names of the more respectable of the community
101 nity that surrounded them. This process of assimilation
564 is going on even yet. Chettis of Coimbatore, for
example, who settled in Palghāt and Valluvanād
within living memory, have developed by this time into
[551] Nāyars. In the census schedules we find instances in
which the males of a house affix the term Nāyar to their
names, while the names of the females end in Chettichi.
Gollas entering the country from the north have similarly,
in course of time, assumed Nāyar customs and manners,
643 and are now styled Nāyars. Again the rājahs and
564 chieftains of the country sometimes raised individuals or
classes who had rendered them meritorious service to
the rank of Nāyars. These men were thereafter styled
Nāyars, but formed a separate sub-division with little
or no communion with the rest of the Nāyar class, until
at least, after the lapse of generations, when their origin
was forgotten. Nāyar may thus at present be considered
to be a term almost as wide and general as Sūdra."

173 According to the Brāhman tradition, the Nāyar
564 caste is the result of union between the Nambūdris with
Dēva, Gandharva and Rakshasa women introduced by
Parasurāma; and this tradition embodies the undoubted
fact that the caste by its practice of hypergamy has had
a very large infusion of Aryan blood. In origin the
Nāyars were probably a race of Dravidian immigrants,
who were amongst the first invaders of Malabar, and as
conquerors assumed the position of the governing and

land-owning class. The large admixture of Aryan blood 173
combined with the physical peculiarities of the country 564
would go far to explain the very marked difference between the Näyar of the present day and what may be considered the corresponding Dravidian races in the rest of the Presidency.*

In connection with the former position of the Näyars 175
as protectors of the State, it is noted by Mr. Logan † that 564
"in Johnston's 'Relations of the most famous Kingdom 701
in the world' (1611), there occurs the following quaintly written account of this protector guild. 'It is strange to see how ready the Souldiour of this country is at his Weapons: they are all gentile men, and tearmed Naires. At seven Years of Age they are put to School to learn [868]
the Use of their Weapons, where, to make them nimble and active, their Sinnewes and Joints are stretched by skilful Fellows, and annointed with the Oyle Sesamus [gingelly: *Sesamum indicum*]: By this annointing they become so light and nimble that they will winde and turn their Bodies as if they had no Bones, casting them forward, backward, high and low, even to the Astonishment of the Beholders. Their continual Delight is in their [186]
Weapon, perswading themselves that no Nation goeth beyond them in Skill and Dexterity.' And Jonathan Duncan, who visited Malabar more than once as one of the Commissioners from Bengal in 1792-93, and afterwards as Governor of Bombay, after quoting the following lines from Mickle's Camoens, Book VII—

> 'Poliar the labouring lower clans are named:
> By the proud Nayrs the noble rank is claimed;
> The toils of culture and of art they scorn:
> The shining faulchion brandish'd in the right—
> Their left arm wields the target in the fight'—

---

* Gazetteer of the Malabar district. † Manual of the Malabar district.

175
564 went on to observe: 'These lines, and especially the two
701 last, contain a good description of a Nayr, who walks
along, holding up his naked sword with the same kind
of unconcern as travellers in other countries carry in
[411] their hands a cane or walking staff. I have observed
others of them have it fastened to their back, the hilt
being stuck in their waist band, and the blade rising
up and glittering between their shoulders' (Asiatic Re-
726 searches, V. 10, 18). M. Mahé de la Bourdonnais, who
175 had some experience of their fighting qualities in the field,
564 thus described them: 'Les Nairs sont de grands hom-
701 mes basanés, légers, et vigoureux: Ils n'ont pas d'autre
profession que celle des armes, et seraient de fort bons soldats, s'ils étiaent disciplinés: mais ils combattent sans ordre, ils prennent la fuite dès qu'on les serre de près avec quelque supèriorité; pourtant, s'ils se voient pressés avec vigueur et qu'ils se croient en danger, ils reviennent à la charge, et ne se rendent jamais' (M. Esquer, Essai sur les Castes dans l'Inde, page 181). Finally, the only British General of any note—Sir Hector Munro—who had ever to face the Nâyars in the field, thus wrote of their modes of fighting:—

'One may as well look for a needle in a Bottle of Hay as any of them in the daytime, they being lurking behind sand banks and bushes, except when we are marching towards the Fort, and then they appear like bees out in the month of June.' 'Besides which,' he continued, 'they point their guns well, and fire them well also' (Tellicherry Factory Diary, March, 1761). They were, in short, brave light troops, excellent in skirmishing, but their organization into small bodies with discordant interests unfitted them to repel any serious invasion by an enemy even moderately well organised. Among other strange Malayâli customs, Sheikh

Zin-ud-din * noticed the fact that, if a chieftain was slain, 726
his followers attacked and obstinately persevered in ravaging 175
the slayer's country, and killing his people till their 564
vengeance was satisfied. This custom is doubtless that 701
which was described so long ago as in the ninth century A.D. by two Muhammadans, whose work was translated
by Renaudot (Lond., 1733). 'There are kings who, 643
upon their accession, observe the following ceremony. 796
A quantity of cooked rice was spread before the king, 762
and some three or four hundred persons came of their 175
own accord, and received each a small quantity of rice from the king's own hands after he himself had eaten some. By eating of this rice they all engage themselves to burn themselves on the day the king dies or is slain, and they punctually fulfil their promise.' Men, who devoted themselves to certain death on great occasions, were termed Amoucos by the Portuguese; and Barbosa, one of the Portuguese writers, alluded to the practice as prevalent among the Nāyars. Purchas has also the following:—'The king of Cochin hath a great number of Gentlemen, which he calleth Amocchi, and some are called Nairi: these two sorts of men esteem not their lives anything, so that it may be for the honour of the king.' The proper Malayālam term for such men was Chāver, literally those who took up, or devoted themselves to death. It was a custom of the Nāyars, which was readily adopted by the Māppillas, who also at times—as at the great Mahāmakkam, twelfth year feast, at Tirunāvāyi †—devoted themselves to death in the

---

* The author of Tahafat-ul-Mujahidin or hints for persons seeking the way to God, as it is frequently translated, or more literally an offering to warriors who shall fight in defence of religion against infidels. Translated by Rowlandson. London, 1833.

† See Manual of the Malabar district, 164, sq., and Fawcett, Madras Museum Bull., III, 3, 1901.

175 company of Nāyars for the honour of the Valluvanad
643 Rāja. And probably the frantic fanatical rush of the
762 Māppillas on British bayonets, which is not even yet
796 a thing of the past, is the latest development of this
ancient custom of the Nāyars. The martial spirit of
181 the Nāyars in these piping times of peace has quite
died out for want of exercise. The Nāyar is more and
[224] more becoming a family man. Comparatively few of
them now-a-days even engage in hunting." According
175 to an inscription of the King Kulōttunga I (A.D. 1083-
648 84), he conquered Kudamalai-Nadu, *i.e.*, the western hill
181 country (Malabar), whose warriors, the ancestors of the
703 Nāyars of the present day, perished to the last man in
defending their independence.*

175 The following description of the Nāyars at the
564 beginning of the sixteenth century is given by Duarte
701 Barbosa.† "The Nairs are the gentry, and have no
[411] other duty than to carry on war, and they continually
carry their arms with them, which are swords, bows,
arrows, bucklers, and lances. They all live with the
kings, and some of them with other lords, relations of the
kings, and lords of the country, and with the salaried
governors, and with one another. They are very smart
men, and much taken up with their nobility. . . .
These Nairs, besides being all of noble descent, have to
be armed as knights by the hand of a king or lord with
whom they live, and until they have been so equipped
they cannot bear arms nor call themselves Nairs. . . .
175 In general, when they are seven years of age, they are
868 immediately sent to school to learn all manner of feats
of agility and gymnastics for the use of their weapons.

---

* E. Hultzsch, South-Indian Inscriptions, III, 2, 1203.

† Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar. Translation. Hakluyt Society, 1866.

First they learn to dance and then to tumble, and for 175
that purpose they render supple all their limbs from their 868
childhood, so that they can bend them in any direction.
. . . These Nairs live outside the towns separate from 175
other people on their estates which are fenced in. When 564
they go anywhere, they shout to the peasants, that they 683
may get out of the way where they have to pass; and
the peasants do so, and, if they did not do it, the Nairs
might kill them without penalty. And, if a peasant were
by misfortune to touch a Nair lady, her relations would
immediately kill her, and likewise the man that touched
her and all his relations. This, they say, is done to
avoid all opportunity of mixing the blood with that
of the peasants. . . . These are very clean and 175
well-dressed women, and they hold it in great honour to 564
know how to please men. They have a belief amongst 831
them that the woman who dies a virgin does not go to
paradise."

Writing in the eighteenth century, Hamilton states* 175
that "it was an ancient custom for the Samorin (Zamorin) 643
to reign but twelve years, and no longer. If he died 762
before his term was expired, it saved him a troublesome
ceremony of cutting his own throat on a public scaffold
erected for that purpose. He first made a feast for all
his nobility and gentry, who were very numerous. After
the feast he saluted his guests, went on the scaffold, and
very neatly cut his own throat in the view of the assembly.
His body was, a little while after, burned with great pomp
and ceremony, and the grandees elected a new Samorin.
Whether that custom was a religious or a civil ceremony 175
I know not, but it is now laid aside, and a new custom 178
is followed by the modern Samorin, that a jubilee is 643
796

---

* New Account of the East Indies, 1744.

175 proclaimed throughout his dominion at the end of twelve
178 years, and a tent is pitched for him in a spacious plain,
643 and a great feast is celebrated for ten or twelve days with
796 mirth and jollity, guns firing night and day, so at the end
of the feast any four of the guests that have a mind to gain a crown by a desperate action in fighting their way through thirty or forty thousand of his guards, and kill the Samorin in his tent, he that kills him succeeds him in his empire. In Anno 1695 one of these jubilees happened, and the tent pitched near Ponnany, a sea-port of his about fifteen leagues to the southward of Calicut. There were but three men that would venture on that desperate action, who fell on, with sword and target, among the guards, and, after they had killed and wounded many, were themselves killed. One of the desperadoes had a nephew of fifteen or sixteen years of age that kept close by his uncle in the attack on the guards, and, when he saw him fall, the youth got through the guards into the tent, and made a stroke at his Majesty's head, and had certainly dispatched him if a large brass lamp which was burning over his head had not marred the blow, but, before he could make another, he was killed by the guards, and I believe the same Samorin reigns yet."

175 It is noted by Sonnerat[*] that the Nāyars "are the
564 warriors; they have also the privilege of enjoying all the
683 women of their caste. Their arms, which they constantly
carry, distinguish them from the other tribes. They are besides known by their insolent haughtiness. When they perceive pariahs, they call out to them, even at a great distance, to get out of their way, and, if any one of these unfortunate people approaches too near a Nair, and through inadvertence touches him, the Nair has a right

---

[*] Voyage to the East Indies, 1774 and 1781.

175.
to murder him, which is looked upon as a very innocent 564
action, and for which no complaint is ever made. It is 683
true that the pariahs have one day in the year when all [567]
the Nairs they can touch become their slaves, but the [527]
Nairs take such precautions to keep out of the way at
the time, that an accident of that kind seldom happens."
It is further recorded by Buchanan * that "the whole of
these Nairs formed the militia of Malayala, directed by
the Namburis and governed by the Rajahs. Their chief 564
delight is in arms, but they are more inclined to use them 701
for assassination or surprise, than in the open field.
Their submission to their superiors was great, but they
exacted deference from those under them with a cruelty
and arrogance, rarely practised but among Hindus in
their state of independence. A Nair was expected to 564
instantly cut down a Tiar or Mucuai, who presumed to 683
defile him by touching his person; and a similar fate [567]
awaited a slave, who did not turn out of the road as a
Nair passed."

Nāyar is commonly said to be derived from the Sans- 101
krit Nāyaka, a leader, and to be cognate with Naik, and 174
Nayudu or Naidu. In this connection, Mr. L. Moore [127]
writes † that "if a reference is made to the Anglo-Indian
Glossary (Hobson-Jobson) by Yule and Burnell, it
will be found that the term Naik or Nayakan, and the
word Nayar are derived from the same Sanskrit original,
and there is a considerable amount of evidence to show
that the Nayars of Malabar are closely connected by
origin with the Nayakans of Vijayanagar.‡ Xavier,
writing in 1542 to 1544, makes frequent references to
men whom he calls Badages, who are said to have been

---

* Journey through Mysore, Canara, and Malabar, 1807.

† Malabar Law and Custom, 3rd ed., 1905.

‡ *Vide* R. Sewell. A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagar), 1900.

Travancore. It is a distinctive suffix to the names of 556
Nāyar sons of Travancore Sovereigns. But, in ancient 553
times, this title was conferred on others also, in recognition 424
of merit. Tambis alone proceed in palanquins, and
appear before the Mahārāja without a head-dress. The [644]
consorts of Mahārājas are selected from these families. [584]
If a lady from outside is to be accepted as consort, she is [597]
generally adopted into one of these families. The title
Karta, or doer, appears also to have been used as a
titular name by some of the rulers of Madura. [At the
Madras census, 1901, Kartākkal was returned by Balijas
claiming to be descendants of the Nāyak kings of Madura
and Tanjore.] The Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur [643]
Rājas in Malabar are said to have first conferred the
title Karta on certain influential Nāyar families. In
social matters the authority of the Karta was supreme,
and it was only on important points that higher author-
ities were called on to intercede. All the Kartas belong [564]
to the Illam sub-division of the Nāyar caste. The title
Kuruppu, though assumed by other castes than Nāyars,
really denotes an ancient section of the Nāyars, charged
with various functions. Some were, for instance, instruc- [644]
tors in the use of arms, while others were superintendents
of maid-servants in the royal household. Writing con- 175
cerning the Zamorin of Calicut about 1500 A.D., Barbosa 556
states that "the king has a thousand waiting women, to 644
whom he gives regular pay, and they are always at the
court to sweep the palaces and houses of the king, and he
does this for the State, because fifty would be enough to
sweep." When a Mahārāja of Travancore enters into a 643
matrimonial alliance, it is a Kuruppu who has to call 584
out the full title of the royal consort, Panappillai Amma, 553
after the presentation of silk and cloth has been per- 644
formed. The title Panikkar is derived from pani, work.

556 553 644 [875) It was the Panikkars who kept Kalaris, or gymnastic and military schools, but in modern times many Panikkars have taken to the teaching of letters. Some are entirely devoted to temple service, and are consequently regarded as belonging to a division of Mārans, rather than of Nāyars. The title Kaimal is derived from kai, hand, signifying power. In former times, some Kaimals were recognised chieftains, *e.g.*, the Kaimal of Vaikkattillam in North Travancore. Others were in charge of the royal treasury, which, according to custom, could not be seen even by the kings except in their presence. "Neither could they," Barbosa writes, "take anything out of the treasury without a great necessity, and by the counsel of this person and certain others." The titles Unnithan and Valiyathan were owned by certain families in Central Travancore, which were wealthy and powerful. [692] They were to some extent self-constituted justices of the peace, and settled all ordinary disputes arising in the kara where they dwelt. The title Menavan, or Menon, means a superior person, and is derived from mel, above, and avan he. The recipient of the title held it for his lifetime, or it was bestowed in perpetuity on his family, according to the amount of money paid down as atīyara. As soon as an individual was made a Menon, he was presented with an ola (palmyra leaf for writing on) and an iron style as symbols of the office of accountant, which [451) he was expected to fill. In British Malabar even now every amsam or revenue village has an accountant or writer called Menon. The title Menokki, meaning one who looks over or superintends, is found only in British Malabar, as it was exclusively a creation of the Zamorin. [They are, I gather, accountants in temples.]

564 "There are numerous sub-divisions comprised under the general head Nāyar, of which the most important,

mentioned in vernacular books, are Kiriyam, Illam, 564 Svarupam, Itacheri or Idacheri, Pallichan, Ashtikkurichchi, Vattakātan, Otatu, Pulikkal, Vyapari, Vilakkitalavan, and Veluthetan. Of these Ashtikkurichchi and Pulikkal [463] are divisions of Mārān, Vyapari is a division of Chettis, and Vilakkitalavan and Veluthetan are barbers and washermen respectively.

"The chief divisions of Nāyars, as now recognised, are as follows:—

1. Kiriyam, a name said to be a corruption of the Sanskrit griha, meaning house. This represents the highest class, the members of which were, in former times, not obliged to serve Brāhmans and Kshatriyas.

2. Illakkar.—The word illam indicates a Nambūtiri Brāhman's house, and tradition has it that every illam family once served an illam. But, in mediæval times, any Nāyar could get himself recognised as belonging to the Illam division, provided that a certain sum of money, called adiyara, was paid to the Government. The [262] Illakkar are prohibited from the use of fish, flesh, and [273] liquor, but the prohibition is not at the present day universally respected. In some parts of Malabar, they [178] have moulded many of their habits in the truly Brāhmanical style.

3. Svarupakkar.—Adherents of the Kshatriya families of Travancore. The members of the highest group, Parūr Svarupam, have their purificatory rites performed by Mārāns. It is stated that they were once the Illakkar servants of one Karuttetathu Nambutiri, who was the feudal lord of Parūr, and afterwards became attached to the royal household which succeeded to that estate, thus becoming Parūr Svarupakkar.

4. Padamangalam and Tamil Padam were not originally Nāyars, but immigrants from the Tamil

564 country. They are confined to a few localities in [184] Travancore, and until recently there was a distinctive difference in regard to dress and ornaments between the [463] Tamil Padam and the ordinary Nāyars. The occupation of the Padamangalakkar is temple service, such as sweeping, carrying lamps during processions, etc. The Tamil Padakkar are believed to have taken to various kinds of occupation, and, for this reason, to have become merged with other sections.

5. Vāthi or Vātti.—This name is not found in the Jatinirnaya, probably because it had not been differentiated from Mārān. The word is a corruption of vāzhti, meaning praying for happiness, and refers to their [534] traditional occupation. They use a peculiar drum, called nantuni. Some call themselves Daivampatis, or wards of God, and follow the makkathāyam system of inheritance (in the male line).

[234] 6. Itacheri or Idacheri, also called Pantaris in South Travancore. They are herdsmen, and vendors of milk, butter and curds. The name suggests a relation of some kind to the Idaiyan caste of the Tamil country.

[644] 7. Karuvelam, known also by other names, such as Kappiyara and Tiruvattar. Their occupation is service in the palace of the Mahārāja, and they are the custodians of his treasury and valuables. Fifty-two families are believed to have been originally brought from Kolathanād, when a member thereof was adopted into the Travancore royal family.

8. Arikuravan.—A name, meaning those who reduced the quantity of rice out of the paddy given to them to husk at the temple of Kazhayakkuttam near Trivandrum, by which they were accosted by the local chieftain.

9. Pallichchan.—Bearers of palanquins for Brāhmans and Malabar chieftains. They are also employed

as their attendants, to carry their sword and shield 564
before them.

10. Vandikkāran.—A name, meaning cartmen, for those who supply fuel to temples, and cleanse the vessels belonging thereto.

11. Kuttina.—The only heiress of a Svarupam tarwad is said to have been a maid-servant in the Vadakkketam Brāhman's house, and her daughter's tālikettu ceremony to have been celebrated in her master's newly-built cowshed. The bride was called kuttilachchi, or bride in a cowshed, and her descendants were named
Kuttina Nāyars. They intermarry among themselves, [783]
and, having no priests of their own, obtain purified water [793]
from Brāhmans to remove the effects of pollution.

12. Matavar.—Also known as Puliyattu, Veliyattu, and Kāllur Nāyars. They are believed to have been good archers in former times.

13. Otatu, also called Kusa. Their occupation is to tile or thatch temples and Brāhman houses.

14. Mantalayi.—A tract of land in the Kalkulam taluk, called Mantalachchi Konam, was granted to them
by the State. They are paid mourners, and attend at [765]
the Trivandrum palace when a death occurs in the royal family.

15. Manigrāmam.—Believed to represent Hindu [797]
recoveries from early conversion to Christianity. Manigrāmam was a portion of Cranganore, where early Christian immigrants settled.

16. Vattaykkatan, better known in Travancore as Chakala Nāyars, form in many respects the lowest sub-division. They are obliged to stand outside the sacrificial stones (balikallu) of a sanctuary, and are not allowed to take the title Pillai. Pulva is a title of distinction among them. One section of them is engaged

in the hereditary occupation of oil-pressing, and occupies a lower position in the social scale than the other."

The following list of "clans" among the Nâyars of Malabar whom he examined anthropometrically is given by Mr. F. Fawcett [*] :—

Kiriyattil.
Sudra.
Kurup.
Nambiyar.
Urâli.
Nalliôden.
Viyyûr.
Akattu Charna.
Purattu Charna.
Vattakkâd.
Vangilôth.
Kitavu.
Pallichan.
Muppathinâyiran.
Viyapâri or Ravari.
Attikurissi.
Manavalan.
Adungâdi.
Adiôdi.
Amayengolam.

"The Kurup, Nambiyar Viyyûr, Manavâlan, Vengôlan, Nelliôden, Adungâdi, Kitâvu, Adiôdi, Âmayengolam, all superior clans, belong, properly speaking, to North Malabar. The Kiriyattil, or Kiriyam, is the highest of all the clans in South Malabar, and is supposed to comprise, or correspond with the group of clans first named from North Malabar. The Akattu Charna clan is divided into two sub-clans, one of which looks to the Zamorin as their lord, and the other owns lordship to minor lordlings, as the Tirumulpâd of Nilambûr. The former are superior, and a woman of the latter may mate with a man of the former, but not *vice versâ*. In the old days, every Nâyar chief had his Charnavar, or adherents. The Purattu Charna are the outside adherents, or fighters and so on, and the Akattu Charna are the inside adherents—clerks and domestics. The clan from which the former were drawn is superior to the latter. The Urâlis are said to have been masons; the Pallichans manchil

---

[*] Madras Museum Bull., III, 3, 1901.

bearers.* The Sūdra clan supplies female servants in the 564
houses of Nambūdiris. The Vattakkād (or Chakkingal : [258]
chakku, oil press) clan, whose proper *métier* is producing
gingelly or cocoanut oil with the oil-mill, is the lowest
of all, excepting, I think, the Pallichan. Indeed, in [553]
North Malabar, I have frequently been told by Nāyars of
the superior clans that they do not admit the Vattakkād
to be Nāyars, and say that they have adopted the
honorary affix Nāyar to their names quite recently."
There is some obscurity as regards the sub-divisions
of the Vattakkād clan. To the north of Calicut, in
Kurumbranād, they are divided into the Undiātuna, or
those who pull (to work the oil-machine by hand), and
the Murivechchu-ātune, or those who tie or fasten
bullocks, to work the oil-machine. Yet further north,
at Tellicherry and thereabouts, there are no known
sub-divisions, while in Ernād, to the eastward, the clan
is divided into the Veluttātu (white) and Karuttātu
(black). The white have nothing to do with the [258]
expression and preparation of oil, which is the hereditary [264]
occupation of the black. The white may eat with
Nāyars of any clan ; the black can eat with no others
outside their own clan. The black sub-clan is strictly
endogamous ; the other, the superior sub-clan, is not.
Their women may marry men of any other clan, the
Pallichchan excepted. Union by marriage, or whatever
the function may be named, is permissible between most
of the other clans, the rule by which a woman may
never unite herself with her inferior being always
observed. She may unite herself with a man of her
own clan, or with a man of any superior clan, or with
a Nambūtiri, an Embrāntiri, or any other Brāhman,

---

* A manchil is a conveyance carried on men's shoulders, and more like a hammock slung on a pole, with a flat covering over it, than a palanquin. [493]

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

564 or with one of the small sects coming between the
Brāhmans and the Nāyars. But she cannot under any
circumstances unite herself with a man of a clan, which
[264] is inferior to hers. Nor can she eat with those of a clan
inferior to her ; a man may, and does without restriction.
564 Her children by an equal in race and not only in mere
651 social standing, but never those by one who is racially
613 inferior, belong to her taravād.* The children of the
inferior mothers are never brought into the taravād of
the superior fathers, *i.e.*, they are never brought into it
to belong to it, but they may live there. And, where
they do so, they cannot enter the taravād kitchen, or
touch the women while they are eating. Nor are they
allowed to touch their father's corpse. They may live
in the taravād under these and other disabilities, but
557 are never of it. The custom, which permits a man
564 to cohabit with a woman lower in the social scale than
831 himself, and prohibits a woman from exercising the
same liberty, is called the rule of anulōmam and pratilōmam.
Dr. Gundert derives anulōmam from anu, with
lōmam (rōmam), hair, or going with the hair or grain.
So pratilōmam means going against the hair or grain.
According to this usage, a Nāyar woman, consorting
with a man of a higher caste, follows the hair, purifies
the blood, and raises the progeny in social estimation.
558 By cohabitation with a man of a lower division (clan)
564 or caste, she is guilty of pratilōmam, and, if the
831 difference of caste were admittedly great, she would
be turned out of her family, to prevent the whole
564 family being boycotted. A corollary of this custom
851 is that a Nambūtiri Brāhman father cannot touch his
783 own children by his Nāyar consort without bathing

---

* Tarwād or taravād, a marumakkathayam family, consisting of all the descendants in the female line of one common female ancestor.

afterwards to remove pollution. The children in the 564
marumakkatayam family belong, of course, to their 851
mother's family, clan, and caste. They are Nāyars, not 783
Nambūtiris. The Nāyars of North Malabar are held to
be superior all along the line, clan for clan, to those 564
of South Malabar, which is divided from the north by the
river Korapuzha, seven miles north of Calicut, so that a
woman of North Malabar would not unite herself to a
man of her own clan name of South Malabar. A Nāyar
woman of North Malabar cannot pass northward beyond
the frontier; she cannot pass the hills to the eastward; [484]
and she cannot cross the Korapuzha to the south. It is [784]
tabu. The women of South Malabar are similarly confined [562]
by custom, breach of which involves forfeiture of
caste. To this rule there is an exception, and of late 564
years the world has come in touch with the Malayāli, 562
who nowadays goes to the University, studies medicine 178
and law in the Presidency town (Madras), or even in far 484
off England. Women of the relatively inferior Akattu
Charna clan are not under quite the same restrictions as
regards residence as are those of most of the other clans;
so, in these days of free communications, when Malayālis
travel, and frequently reside far from their own country,
they often prefer to select wives from this Akattu Charna
clan. But the old order changeth everywhere, and nowadays
Malayālis who are in the Government service, and
obliged to reside far away from Malabar, and a few who
have taken up their abode in the Presidency town, have
wrenched themselves free of the bonds of custom, and
taken with them their wives who are of clans other than
the Akattu Charna. The interdiction to travel, and the
possible exception to it in the case of Akattu Charna
women, has been explained to me in this way. The 841
Nāyar woman observes pollution for three days during 783
484
564

564
484

841 783 [613] menstruation. While in her period, she may not eat or drink with any other member of the taravād, and on the fourth day she must be purified. Purification is known as māttu (change), and it is effected by the washerwoman, who, in some parts of South Malabar, is of the Mannān or Vannān caste, whose *métier* is to wash for the Nāyars and Nambūtiris, but who is, as a rule, the washerwoman of the Tīyan caste, giving her, after her bath, one of her own cloths to wear (māttu, change of raiment) instead of the soiled cloth, which she takes away to wash. Pollution, which may come through a death in the family, through child-birth, or menstruation, must be removed by māttu. Until it is done, the woman is out of caste. It must be done in the right way at the right moment, under pain of the most unpleasant social consequences. [689] [613] How that the influential rural local magnate wreaks vengeance on a taravād by preventing the right person giving māttu to the women is well known in Malabar. He could not, with all the sections of the Penal Code at his disposal, inflict greater injury. Now the Nāyar woman is said to feel compelled to remain in Malabar, or within her own part of it, in order to be within reach of māttu. My informant tells me that, the Vannān caste being peculiar to Malabar, the Nāyar women cannot go where these are not to be found, and that māttu must be done by one of that caste. But I know, from my own observation in the most truly conservative localities, in Kurumbranād for example, where the Nāyar has a relative superiority, that the washerman is as a rule a Tīyan; and I cannot but think that the interdiction 843 784 562 has other roots than those involved in māttu. It does not account for the superstition against crossing water, which has its counterparts elsewhere in the world. The origin of the interdiction to cross the river southwards

has been explained to me as emanating from a command 823
of the Kōlatirri Rājah in days gone by, when, the Arabs 784
having come to the country about Calicut, there was a 562
chance of the women being seized and taken as wives.
The explanation is somewhat fanciful. The prohibition
to cross the river to the northwards is supposed to have
originated in much the same way. As bearing on this
point, I may mention that the Nāyar women living to
the east of Calicut cannot cross the river backwater, and
come into the town." It may be noted in this connection [776]
that the Paikāra river on the Nīlgiri hills is sacred to the [843]
Todas, and, for fear of mishap from arousing the wrath
of the river-god, a pregnant Toda woman will not venture
to cross it. No Toda will use the river water for any
purpose, and they do not touch it, unless they have to
ford it. They then walk through it, and, on reaching
the opposite bank, bow their heads. Even when they
walk over the Paikāra bridge, they take their hands out
of the putkuli (body-cloth) as a mark of respect.

The complexity of the sub-divisions among the 564
Nāyars in North Malabar is made manifest by the
following account thereof in the Gazetteer of Malabar.
"There are exogamous sub-divisions (perhaps corresponding [613]
to original tarwāds) called kulams, and these
are grouped to form the sub-castes which are usually
endogamous. It is quite impossible to attempt a complete 564
account of the scheme, but to give some idea of its 634
nature one example may be taken, and dealt with in some
detail; and for this purpose the portion of Kurumbranād
known as Payyanād will serve. This is the country [644]
between the Kōttapuzha and Pōrapuzha rivers, and is
said to have been given by a Rāja of Kurumbranād to a
certain Ambādi Kōvilagam Tamburātti (the stānam or
title of the senior lady of the Zāmorin Rāja's family). In

564 this tract or nād there were originally six stānis or chieftains,
634 who ruled, under the Rāja, with the assistance, or
subject to the constitutional control, of four assemblies of
Nāyars called Kūttams. Each kūttam had its hereditary
president. In this tract there are seven groups of
kulams. The highest includes twelve kulams, Vengalat,
Pattillat, Vīyyūr, Nelliōt, Atunkudi, Amayangalat,
Nellōli, Nilanchēri, Rendillat, Pulliyāni, Orakātteri, and
[553] Venmēri. Of these, the Pattillat and Rendillat (members
of the ten and members of the two *illams* or houses) affix
the title Adiyōdi to their names, the last three affix the
title Nambiyar, and the rest affix Nāyar. Of the six
stānis already mentioned, three, with the title of Adiyōdi,
belong to the Vengalat kulam, while two of the presidents
of kuttams belonged to the Pattillat kulam. The
younger members of the stāni houses are called kidavu.
It is the duty of women of Viyyūr and Nelliōt kulams to
join in the bridal procession of members of the Vengalat
kulam, the former carrying lamps, and the latter
salvers containing flowers, while the Rendillat Adiyōdis
564 furnish cooks to the same class. Pattillat Adiyōdis
783 and Orakātteri Nambiyars observe twelve days' pollution,
while all the other kulams observe fifteen. The
second group consists of six kulams, Eravattūr, Ara-Eravattūr
(or half Eravattūr), and Attikōdan Nāyars,
Tonderi Kidāvus, Punnan Nambiyars, and Mēnōkkis.
All these observe fifteen days' pollution. The third
group consists of three kulams, Tacchōli to which the
remaining three stānis belong, Kōthōli, and Kuruvattānchēri.
[553] All affix Nāyar to their names, and observe
fifteen days' pollution. The fourth group consists of
three kulams, Peruvānian Nambiyars, Chellādan Nāyars,
[643] and Vennapālan Nāyars. All three observe fifteen
days' pollution. The name Peruvānian means great or

principal oil-man ; and it is the duty of this caste to 564
present the Kurumbranād Rāja with oil on the occasion 783
of his formal installation. The fifth group consists of the [643]
three kulams, Mannangazhi, Paramchela, and Pallikara
Nāyars, all observing fifteen days' pollution. A member 564
of the first-named class has to place an āmanapalaga [643]
(the traditional seat of Nambūdiris and other high castes)
for the Kurumbranād Rāja to sit on at the time of
his installation, while a member of the second has to
present him with a cloth on the same occasion. The
sixth group consists of four kiriyams named Patam,
Tulu, Manan, and Ottu respectively, and has the collective name of Rāvāri. The seventh group consists
of six kulams, Kandōn, Kannankōdan, Kotta, Karumba,
Kundakollavan, and Panakādan Nāyars. All observe [783]
fifteen days' pollution, and the women of these six
kulams have certain duties to perform in connection with [841]
the purification of women of the Vengalat, Paṭṭillat, and
Orakatteri kulams. Besides these seven groups, there
are a few other classes without internal sub-divisions.
One such class is known as Pāppini Nāyar. A woman
of this class takes the part of the Brāhmini woman
(Nambissan) at the tāli-kettu kalyanam of girls belonging
to the kulams included in the third group. Another
class called Pālattavan takes the place of the Attikurissi
Nāyar at the funeral ceremonies of the same three
kulams."

In illustration of the custom of polyandry among the 595
Nāyars of Malabar in by-gone days, the following
extracts may be quoted. "On the continent of India," it is recorded in Ellis' edition of the Kural, "polyandry is still said to be practiced in Orissa, and among particular tribes in other parts. In Malayālam, as is well known, the vision of Plato in his ideal republic is more completely

595 law as by a kind of tacit convention, it scarcely ever
happening that it exceeds six or seven. The woman,
however, is under no obligation to admit above a single
attachment, though not less respected for using her
[201] privilege to its utmost extent. If one of the husbands
happens to come to the house when she is employed
with another, he knows that circumstance by certain
signals left at the door that his turn is not come, and
● 564 departs very resignedly." Writing about the same time,
595 Sonnerat * says that "these Brāhmans do not marry,
but have the privilege of enjoying all the Nairesses.
[648] This privilege the Portuguese who were esteemed as a
great caste, obtained and preserved, till their drunkenness
and debauchery betrayed them into a commerce
with all sorts of women. The following right is established
[851] by the customs of the country. A woman without
shame may abandon herself to all men who are not of an
[604] inferior caste to her own, because the children (notwithstanding
what Mr. de Voltaire says) do not belong to
the father, but to the mother's brother; they become
his legitimate heirs at their birth, even of the crown if he
is king." In his 'Voyages and Travels', Kerr writes
as follows. † "By the laws of their country these Nayres
cannot marry, so that no one has any certain or acknowledged
son or father; all their children being born of
mistresses, with each of whom three or four Nayres
cohabit by agreement among themselves. Each one of
this cofraternity dwells a day in his turn with the joint
mistress, counting from noon of one day to the same
time of the next, after which he departs, and another

---

* Voyage to the East Indies, 1774 and 1781.

† R. Kerr. General History and Collection of Voyages and Travels, 1811, History of the Discovery and Conquest of India by the Portuguese between the years 1497 and 1525, from the original Portuguese of Herman Lopes de Castaneda.

comes for the like time. Thus they spend their time 595 without the care or trouble of wives and children, yet 564 maintain their mistresses well according to their rank. Any one may forsake his mistress at his pleasure; and, in like manner, the mistress may refuse admittance to any one of her lovers when she pleases. These mistresses are all gentlewomen of the Nayre caste, and the Nayres, besides being prohibited from marrying, must not attach themselves to any woman of a different rank. Considering [851] that there are always several men attached to one [604] woman, the Nayres never look upon any of the children born of their mistresses as belonging to them, however strong a resemblance may subsist, and all inheritances among the Nayres go to their brothers, or the sons of their sisters, born of the same mothers, all relationship being counted only by female consanguinity and descent. This strange law prohibiting marriage was established that they might have neither wives nor children on whom to fix their love and attachment; and that, being free from all family cares, they might more willingly devote themselves entirely to warlike service." The [578] term son of ten fathers is used as a term of abuse among Nāyars to this day.* Tīpū Sultān is said to have issued the following proclamation to the Nāyars, on the occasion of his visit to Calicut in 1788. "And, [648] since it is a practice with you for one woman to associate with ten men, and you leave your mothers and sisters unconstrained in their obscene practices, and are thence all born in adultery, and are more shameless in your connections than the beasts of the field; I hereby require you to forsake these sinful practices, and live like the rest of mankind." †

---

* Wigram, Malabar Law and Custom, Ed. 1900.

† T. A. Kalyanakrishna Aiyar, Malabar Quart. Review, II, 1903.

595 As to the present existence or non-existence of
polyandry I must call recent writers into the witness-box.
The Rev. S. Mateer, Mr. Fawcett writes,* "informed me
ten years ago—he was speaking of polyandry among the
Nāyars of Travancore—that he had 'known an instance
of six brothers keeping two women, four husbands to one,
and two to the other. In a case where two brothers
[797] cohabited with one woman, and one was converted to
[171] Christianity, the other brother was indignant at the
Christian's refusal to live any longer in this condition.'
I have not known an admitted instance of polyandry
amongst the Nāyars of Malabar at the present day, but
there is no doubt that, if it does not exist now (and I
think it does here and there), it certainly did not long
● [564] ago." Mr. Gopal Panikkar says † that "to enforce this
social edict upon the Nairs, the Brāhmans made use
of the powerful weapon of their aristocratic ascendancy
in the country, and the Nairs readily submitted to
the Brāhman supremacy. Thus it came about that the
custom of concubinage, so freely indulged in by the
Brāhmans with Nair women, obtained such firm hold upon
the country that it has only been strengthened by the
lapse of time. At the present day there are families,
especially in the interior of the district, who look upon it
as an honour to be thus united with Brāhmans. But a
[178] reaction has begun to take place against this feeling,
and Brāhman alliances are invariably looked down upon
in respectable Nair tarwads. This reactionary feeling
took shape in the Malabar Marriage Act." Mr. Justice
K. Narayana Marar says: "There is nothing strange
or to be ashamed of in the fact that the Nāyars were
originally of a stock that practiced polyandry, nor if the

---

* *Op cit.*

† Malabar and its Folk, 1900.

578 invited to the girl's house at an auspicious hour appointed for the purpose, and, in the presence of friends and castemen, ties a tâli (marriage badge) round her neck, and goes away after receiving a certain fee for his trouble. [787] Among the other sects, the horoscope of the girl is examined along with those of her enangan (a recognised member of one's own class) families, and the boy whose horoscope is found to agree with hers is marked out as a fit person to tie the tâli, and a day is fixed for the tâli-tying ceremony by the astrologer, and information given to the Karanavan * (senior male in a tarwad) of the boy's family. The feast is called ayaniūnu; and the boy is thenceforth called Manavâlan or Pillai (bridegroom). From the house in which the Manavâlan is entertained a procession is formed, preceded by men with swords, and [613] shields shouting a kind of war-cry. In the meantime a procession starts from the girl's house, with similar men and cries, and headed by a member of her tarwad, to meet the other procession, and, after meeting the Manavâlan, he escorts him to the girl's house. After entering the booth erected for the purpose, he is conducted to a seat of honour, and his feet are washed by the brother of the girl, who receives a pair of cloths. The Manavâlan is then taken to the centre of the booth, where bamboo mats, carpets and white cloths are spread, and seated there. The brother of the girl then carries her from inside the house, and, after going round the booth three times, places her at the left side of the Manavâlan. The father of the girl then presents new cloths tied in a kambli (blanket) to the pair, and with this [613] new cloth (called manthravadi) they change their dress. [564] The wife of the Karanavan of the girl's tarwad, if she be

---

* The rights and obligations of Karanavans are fully dealt with by Moore, Malabar Law and Custom, 3rd edition, 1905.

of the same caste, then decorates the girl by putting [613]
on anklets, etc. The purōhit (officiating priest) called [564]
Elayath (a low class of Brāhmans) then gives the tāli [793]
to the Mānavālan, and "the family astrologer shouts [787]
muhurtham (auspicious hour), and the Manavālan,
putting his sword on the lap, ties the tāli round the
neck of the girl, who is then required to hold an
arrow and a looking-glass in her hand. In rich families [556]
a Brāhmani sings certain songs intended to bless the [533]
couple. In ordinary families who cannot procure her
presence, a Nāyar, versed in songs, performs the office.
The boy and girl are then carried by enangans to [783]
a decorated apartment in the inner part of the house,
where they are required to remain under a sort of pollution
for three days. On the fourth day they bathe in
some neighbouring tank (pond) or river, holding each
other's hands. After changing their clothes they come
home, preceded by a procession. Tom-toms (native [534]
drums) and elephants usually form part of the procession, [231]
and turmeric water is sprinkled. When they come
home, all doors of the house are shut, and the Manavālan is
required to force them open. He then enters the house,
and takes his seat in the northern wing thereof. The aunt
and female friends of the girl then approach, and give
sweetmeats to the couple. The girl then serves food to the [264]
boy, and, after taking their meal together from the same
leaf, they proceed to the booth, where a cloth is severed
into two parts, and each part given to the Manavālan
and girl separately in the presence of enangans and
friends. The severing of the cloth is supposed to [586]
constitute a divorce." "The tearing of the cloth," [184]
Mr. Fawcett writes, "is confined to South Malabar.
These are the essentials of the ceremony, an adjunct to [765]
which is that, in spite of the divorce, the girl observes

588 death pollution when her Manavālan dies. The same
[765] Manavālan may tie the tāli on any number of girls,
during the same ceremony or at any other time, and he
[793] may be old or young. He is often an elderly holy Brāhman,
[564] who receives a small present for his services. The
girl may remove the tāli, if she likes, after the fourth day.
[184] In some parts of Malabar there is no doubt that the
man who performs the rôle of Manavālan is considered
to have some right to the girl, but in such case it has
been already considered that he is a proper man to enter
into sambandham with her."

588 Of the tāli-kattu kalyānam in Malabar, the following
184 detailed account, mainly furnished by an Urāli Nāyar of
Calicut, is given in the Gazetteer of Malabar. "An
auspicious time has to be selected for the purpose, and
the preliminary consultation of the astrologer is in itself
the occasion of a family gathering. The Manavālan or
quasi-bridegroom is chosen at the same time. For the
actual kalyānam, two pandals (booths), a small one
inside a large one, are erected in front of the padinhātta
macchu or central room of the western wing. They are
decorated with cloth, garlands, lamps and palm leaves,
and the pillars should be of areca palm cut by an Asāri
[778] on Sunday, Monday, or Wednesday. The first day's
ceremonies open with a morning visit to the temple,
[789] where the officiating Brāhman pours water sanctified by
mantrams (religious formulæ), and the addition of leaves
of mango, peepul and darbha, over the girl's head. This
[354] rite is called kalasam maduga. The girl then goes home,
and is taken to the macchu, where a hanging lamp
with five wicks is lighted. This should be kept alight
[352] during all the days of the kalyānam. The girl sits on a
[824] piece of pala (*Alstonia scholaris*) wood, which is called
a mana. She is elaborately adorned, and some castes
[301]

843 performed, usually the vadakkini, there is arranged a
mat, the usual lamp (nilavilakku) with five wicks, and a
para measure of rice (niracchaveppu), also the materials
necessary for the performance of Ganapathi pūja (wor-
ship of the god Ganēsa), consisting of plantains, brown
sugar, leaves of the sacred basil or tulasi (*Ocimum
sanctum*), sandal paste, and the eight spices called
[593] ashtagantham. The woman's brother performs Ganapathi
pūja, and then gives some of the tamarind leaves to the
Enangatti, who expresses their juice, and mixes it with
[824] that of four other plants.* The mixture is boiled with
a little rice, and the brother takes a little of it in a jack
[602] (*Artocarpus integrifolia*) leaf folded like a spoon, and
lets it run down the blade of a knife into his sister's
mouth. He does this three times. Then the mixture
is administered in the same manner by some woman of
the husband's family, and then by an Ammāyi (wife of
[574] one of the members of the girl's tarwad). The branch
is then planted in the nadumittam, and feasting brings
the ceremony to a close. The above description was
obtained from an Urali Nāyar of Calicut taluk. In
other localities and castes, the details vary considerably.
● [564] Sometimes the mixture is simply poured into the
woman's mouth, instead of being dripped off a knife.
Some castes use a small spoon of gold or silver instead
184 of the jack leaves. In South Malabar there is not as
843 a rule any procession to the tamarind tree. Among
564 Agathu Charna Nāyars of South Malabar, the ceremony
takes place in the nadumittam, whither the tamarind
branch is brought by a Tiyan. The girl carries a
valkannadi or bell-metal mirror, a charakkōl or arrow,
and a pisankatti (knife). An Enangatti pours some oil

---

[137] * The aimpuli or "five tamarinds" are *Tamarindus indica*, *Garcinia Cambogia*, *Spondias mangifera*, *Bauhinia racemosa*, and *Hibiscus hirtus*.

184

on her head, and lets it trickle down two or three hairs 843
to her navel, where it is caught in a plate. Then the 564
girl and her brother, holding hands, dig a hole with
the charakkōl and pisankatti, and plant the tamarind
branch in the nadumittam, and water it. Then the [782]
juice is administered. Until she is confined, the girl [824]
waters the tamarind branch, and offers rice, flowers,
and lighted wicks to it three times a day. When labour
begins, she uproots the branch."

"At delivery," Mr. Balakrishnan Nāyar writes, 844
"women of the barber caste officiate as midwives. In 564
some localities, this is performed by Vēlan caste women. 783
Pollution is observed for fifteen days, and every day the 846
mother wears cloths washed and presented by a woman [564]
of the Vannān [or Tīyan] caste. On the fifteenth day is
the purificatory ceremony. As in the case of death pol- [764]
lution, a man of the Attikurissi clan sprinkles on the [825]
woman a liquid mixture of oil and the five products of [824]
the cow (pānchagavya), with gingelly (*Sesamum*) seeds.
Then the woman takes a plunge-bath, and sits on the
ground near the tank or river. Some woman of the
family, with a copper vessel in her hands, takes water
from the tank or river, and pours it on the mother's
head as many as twenty-one times. This done, she
again plunges in the water, from which she emerges
thoroughly purified. It may be noted that, before the
mother proceeds to purify herself, the new-born babe has
also to undergo a rite of purification. It is placed on
the bare floor, and its father or uncle sprinkles a few
drops of cold water on it, and takes it in his hands. The [828]
superstitious believe that the temperament of the child
is determined by that of the person who thus sprinkles
the water. All the members of the taravād observe [613]
pollution for fifteen days following the delivery, during

Then the Karanavan, or the father, ceremoniously 852
approaches, and sits down facing the child. First he 853
puts in the mouth of the child a mixture of the tamarind, [613]
chillies and salt, then some rice, and lastly a little sugar. Thenceforward the ordinary food of the child is rice. It is usual on this occasion for relatives (and especially the bandhus, such as the ammayi, or 'uncle's wife') to adorn the child with gold bangles, rings and other ornaments. The rice-giving ceremony is, in some cases, preferably performed at some famous temple, that at Guruvayūr being a favourite one for this purpose." It [782]
is noted by Mr. N. Subramani Aiyar that the rice- [553]
giving ceremony is usually performed by taking the child to a neighbouring temple, and feeding it with the meal offered to the deity as nivadiyam. In some places, the child is named on the chorūn day.

Of ceremonies which take place in infancy and child- 852
hood, the following account is given in the Gazetteer of 846
Malabar. "On the fifth day after birth, a woman of the 564
Attikurissi or Mārayan caste among Nāyars, or of the barber caste in the lower classes, is called in, and purifies the mother, the other women of the household, and the room in which the child was born, by lustration with milk and gingelly oil, using karuga (*Cynodon Dactylon*) as a sprinkler. Her perquisites are the usual niracchaveppu (1 edangazhi of paddy and 1 nazhi of uncooked rice) placed together with a lamp of five wicks in the room to be cleansed, and a small sum in cash. A similar purification ceremony on the 15th day concludes the pollution period. In some cases, milk and cow's urine [386]
are sprinkled over the woman, and, after she has bathed, [824]
the Mārayan or Attikurissi waves over her and the child two vessels, one containing water stained red with turmeric and lime, and one water blackened with
Powdered charcoal.

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909

AW11 Kerala AW11

Nayar

852

846 powdered charcoal. During this and other periods, a
564 characteristic service called mâttu (change) has to be rendered by people of the Mannân caste to Nâyars, and to other castes by their proper washermen, who may or
[844] may not be Mannâns. On the day of birth, the Mannâtti brings a clean tūni (cloth) of her own, and a mundu (cloth), which she places in the yard, in which she finds the accustomed perquisites of grain set out, and a lamp. An Attikurissi Nâyar woman takes the clean clothes, and the Mannâtti removes those previously worn by the mother. Every subsequent day during the pollution period, the Mannâtti brings a change of raiment, but it is only on the 7th and 15th days that any ceremonial is observed, and that the Attikurissi woman is required. On those days, a Mannân man attends with the Mannâtti. He makes three pradakshinams round the clean clothes, the lamp, and the niracchaveppu, and scatters a little of the grain forming the latter on the ground near it, with an obeisance, before the Attikurissi woman takes the clothes indoors. This rite of mâttu has far reaching importance.
[626] It affords a weapon, by means of which the local tyrant can readily coerce his neighbours, whom he can subject to the disabilities of excommunication by forbidding the washerman to render them this service; while it contributes in no small degree to the reluctance of Malayâli women to leave Kērala, since it is essential that the mâttu should be furnished by the appropriate caste and no other.

852 "On the twenty-eighth day (including the day of birth) comes the Pâlu-kudi (milk-drinking) ceremony, at which some women of the father's family must attend.
[591] Amongst castes in which the wife lives with the husband,
[564] the ceremony takes place in the husband's house, to which the wife and child return for the first time on this day. The usual lamp, niracchaveppu and kindi of water,

764 persons who have died of cholera or small-pox. When
766 preparations for the funeral have been made, the corpse
351 is removed to the natumuttam or central yard of the
house, if there is one (there always is in the larger
houses); and, if there is not, is taken to the front yard,
where it is again laid on plantain leaves. It is washed
and anointed, the usual marks are made with sandal paste
764 and ashes as in life, and it is neatly clothed. There is
613 then done what is called the potavekkuka ceremony,
or placing new cotton cloths (kōti mundu) over the
corpse by the senior member of the deceased's taravād
followed by all the other members, and also the sons-in-law
and daughters-in-law, and all relatives. These cloths are
used for tying up the corpse, when being taken to
184 the place of burial or cremation. In some parts of
Malabar, the corpse is carried on a bier made of fresh
bamboos, tied up in these cloths, while in others it is
carried, well covered in the cloths, by hand. In either
case it is carried by the relatives. Before the corpse
is removed, there is done another ceremony called
804 pāravirakkuka, or filling up pāras. (A pāra is a measure
564 nearly as big as a gallon.) All adult male members
of the taravād take part in it under the direction
of a man of the Attikkurissi clan who occupies the
position of director of the ceremonies during the next
fifteen days, receiving as his perquisites all the rice
and other offerings made to the deceased's spirit. It
consists in filling up three pāra measures with paddy
(unhusked rice), and one edangāli ($\frac{1}{10}$ of a pāra) with raw
782 rice. These offerings of paddy and rice are placed very
near the corpse, together with a burning lamp of the
kind commonly used in Malabar, called nela vilaku. If
the taravād is rich enough to afford one, a silk cloth is
placed over the corpse before its removal for cremation.

no need to continue the annual ceremony for that person. 764
This is called ashtagaya srādh. It puts an end to the 613 [769]
need for all earthly ceremonial. It is believed that the [775]
collection and careful disposal of the ashes of the dead
gives peace to his spirit, and, what is more important, [787]
the pacified spirit will not thereafter injure the living
members of the taravād, cause miscarriage to the women,
possess the men (as with an evil spirit), and so on. On 764
the fifteenth day after death is the purificatory ceremony. 613
Until this has been done, any one touched by any 783
member of the taravād should bathe before he enters
his house, or partakes of any food. A man of the [564]
Athikurisi clan officiates. He sprinkles milk oil, in
which some gingelly seeds have been put, over the
persons of those under pollution. This sprinkling, and
the bath which follows it, remove the death pollution.
The purifier receives a fixed remuneration for his offices [465]
on this occasion, as well as when there is a birth in the
taravād. In the case of death of a senior member of a 766
taravād, well-to-do and recognised as of some importance, 613
there is the feast called pinda atiyantaram on the 765
sixteenth day after death, given to the neighbours and 302
friends. With the observance of this feast of pindams
there is involved the dīksha, or leaving the entire body
unshaved for forty-one days, or for a year. There is no
variable limit between forty-one days or a year. The [184]
forty-one-day period is the rule in North Malabar. I
have seen many who were under the dīksha for a year.
He who lets his hair grow may be a son or nephew of
the deceased. One member only of the taravād bears 766
the mark of mourning by his growth of hair. He who 765
is under the dīksha offers half-boiled rice and gingelly 613
seeds to the spirits of the deceased every morning after [782]
his bath, and he is under restriction from women, from [784]
[834]

766
613 alcoholic drinks, and from chewing betel, also from
765 tobacco. When the dīksha is observed, the ashes of the
[784] dead are not deposited as described already (in the sun-
[834] dried vessel) until its last day—the forty-first or a year
after death. When it is carried on for a year, there is
observed every month a ceremony called bali. It is
noteworthy that, in this monthly ceremony and for the
conclusion of the dīksha, it is not the thirtieth or three
hundred and sixty-fifth day which marks the date for the
ceremonies, but it is the day (of the month) of the star
which was presiding when the deceased met his death:
the returning day on which the star presides.* For the
● [564] bali, a man of the Elayatu caste officiates. The Elayatus
[793] are priests for the Nāyars. They wear the Brāhmin's
thread, but they are not Brāhmins. They are not
permitted to study the Vēdas, but to the Nāyars they
[782] stand in the place of the ordinary purōhit. The officiating
Elayatu prepares the rice for the bali, when to
the deceased, represented by karuka grass, are offered
boiled rice, curds, gingelly seeds, and some other
[465] things. The Elayatu should be paid a rupee for his
services, which are considered necessary even when
the man under dīksha is himself familiar with the
[302] required ceremonial. The last day of the dīksha is one of
festivity. After the bali, the man under dīksha is shaved.
All this over, the only thing to be done for the deceased
is the annual srādh or yearly funeral commemorative rite.
[825] Rice-balls are made, and given to crows. Clapping of
[775] hands announces to these birds that the rice is being
thrown for them, and, should they not come at once and
eat, it is evident that the spirit is displeased, and the
taravād had better look out. The spirits of those who

---

[805] * All caste Hindus who perform the srādh ceremonies calculate the day of death, not by the day of the month, but by the thithis (day after full or new moon).

The spirits of those who
have committed suicide, or met death by any violent 766
means, are always particularly vicious and troublesome 775
to the taravād, their spirits possessing and rendering
miserable some unfortunate member of it. Unless they [782]
are pacified, they will ruin the taravād, so Brāhman
priests are called in, and appease them by means of
tilahōmam, a rite in which sacrificial fire is raised, and
ghī, gingelly, and other things are offered through it."

"There are," Mr. Fawcett writes, "many interesting 764
features in the death ceremonies as performed by the 184
Kiriattil class. Those who carry the corpse to the pyre 613
are dressed as women, their cloths being wet, and each [564]
carries a knife on his person. Two junior male members of the taravād thrust pieces of mango wood into the southern end of the burning pyre, and, when they are lighted, throw them over their shoulders to the southwards without looking round. Close to the northern end of the pyre, two small sticks are fixed in the ground, and tied together with a cloth, over which water is poured thrice. All members of the taravād prostrate to the ground before the pyre. They follow the enangu carrying the pot of water round the pyre, and go home without looking round. They pass to the northern side of the house under an arch made by two men standing east and west, holding at arms length, and touching at the points, the spade that was used to dig the pit under the pyre, and the axe with which the wood for the pyre was cut or felled. 'After this is done the kodali ceremony, using the spade, axe, and big knife. These are placed on the leaves where the corpse had lain. Then follows circumambulation and prostration by all, and the leaves are committed to the burning pyre."

In connection with the death ceremonies, it is noted 763
in the Cochin Census Report, 1901, that "the last 184

mouth. With the breaking of a cocoanut, and the offering 764
of some powdered rice, betel leaf, areca nut, etc., the 184
body is taken to the pyre. The members junior to the
deceased go round the pyre three, five, or seven times,
throw paddy and rice over the dead body, put scantlings
of sandal wood, prostrate at the feet of the corpse, and
then set fire to the pyre. When the body is almost
wholly consumed, one of the male members carries a pot
of water, and, after making three rounds, the pot is
broken and thrown into the pyre. The death of an [766]
elderly male member of a family is marked by udakakriya
and sanchayanam, and the daily bali performed at the
bali kutti (altar) planted in front of the house, or in the
courtyard in the centre of the house, where there is one.
The Ashtikurissi Nāyar officiates as priest at all such
obsequies. On the morning of the fifteenth day, the 765
members of the family wear cloths washed by a Vēlan, 783
and assemble together for purification by the Nāyar 184
priest, both before and after bathing, who throws on them
paddy and rice, and sprinkles the holy mixture. The
Elayad or family purōhit then performs another punnayaham
or purification, and on the sixteenth day he takes
the place of the priest. On the evening of the fifteenth [574]
day, and the morning of the sixteenth day, the purōhits
and villagers are sumptuously feasted, and presents of
cloths and money are made to the Elayads. In the [564]
Chittūr tāluk, the Tamil Brāhman sometimes performs [793]
priestly functions in place of the Elayad. Dīksha is [769]
performed for forty-one days, or for a whole year, for the
benefit of the departed soul. This last ceremony is
invariably performed on the death of the mother, maternal
uncle, and elder brother."

In connection with the habitations of the Nāyars, Mr. 342
Fawcett writes as follows. "A house may face east or [823]

tamarind, and mango. The whole house is known as [illegible]
vitu. The houses are built on various models, such as 342
pattayappura, nālukettu, ettukettu, and kuttikettu."

Concerning the dress of the Nāyars, Mr. N. 291
Subramani Aiyar writes that "the males dress themselves in a mundu (cloth), a loose lower garment, and a towel. A neriyatu, or light cloth of fine texture with coloured border, is sometimes worn round the mundu on festive
occasions. Coats and caps are recent introductions, [177]
but are eschewed by the orthodox as unnational. It is noted by Mr. Logan that 'the women clothe themselves in a single white cloth of fine texture, reaching from the waist to the knees, and occasionally, when abroad, they throw over the shoulder and bosom another similar cloth. But by custom the Nāyar women go uncovered from
the waist. Upper garments indicate lower caste, or [564]
sometimes, by a strange reversal of Western notions, immodesty.' Edward Ives, who came to Anjengo about 1740, observes that 'the groves on each bank of the river are chiefly planted with cocoanut trees, and have been inhabited by men and women in almost a pure state of nature, for they go with their breasts and bellies entirely
naked. This custom prevails universally throughout [564]
every caste from the poorest planter of rice to the [184]
daughter or consort of the king upon the throne.'" [According to ancient custom, Nāyar women in Travancore used to remove their body-cloth in the presence of
the Royal Family. But, since 1856, this custom has [576]
been abolished, by a proclamation during the reign of [643]
H.H. Vanchi Bala Rāma Varma Kulasakhara Perumal Bhagiodya Rāma Varma. In a critique on the Indian Census Report, 1901, Mr. J. D. Rees observes* that

---

* Nineteenth Century, 1904.

bangle there by a messenger. An Akattu Charna Nāyar 301 789
wore an amulet to keep off the spirit of a Brāhman who
died by drowning. Another had a silver ring, on which
a piece of a bristle from an elephant's tail was arranged."

Tattooing is said by Mr. Subramani Aiyar not to be 304
favoured by North Travancore Nāyars, and to be only
practiced by Nāyar women living to the south of Quilon.
Certain accounts trace it to the invasion of Travancore [177]
by a Moghul Sirdar in 1680 A.D. In modern times it
has become rare. The operation is performed by women [564]
of the Odda or Kurava caste before a girl reaches the
twelfth year.

Concerning the religious worship of the Nāyars, Mr. 776
Subramani Aiyar writes that "Buchanan notes that the
proper deity of the Nāyars is Vishnu, though they wear
the mark of Siva on their foreheads. By this is merely
meant that they pay equal reverence to both Siva and
Vishnu, being Smartas converted to the tenets of Saṅkaracharya.
Besides worshipping the higher Hindu deities,
the Nāyars also manifest their adoration for several
minor ones, such as Mātan, Utayam, Yakshi, Chattan,
Chantakarnan, Murti, Maruta, and Arukula. Most of [532]
these have granite representations, or at least such [778]
emblems as a sword or a cane, and are provided with
a local habitation. Besides these, persons who have met [775]
with accidental death, and girls who have died before [766]
their tāli-tying ceremony, are specially worshipped
under the designations of Kazhichchavu and Kannichchavu.
Magicians are held in some fear, and talismanic [791]
amulets are attached to the waist by members of both [789]
sexes. Kuttichattan, the mischievous imp of Malabar,
is supposed to cause much misery. Various spirits [782]
are worshipped on the Tiruvonam day in the month of
Avani (August-September), on the Uchcharam or 28th

In some families, after
796 the meal is over, dancing and games of various kinds
526 are carried on, which contribute to the enhancement of
535 the pleasantries incidental to the festival. As on other
[524] prominent occasions, card-playing and other games are
also resorted to."

264 On the subject of religion, Mr. Fawcett writes as
515 follows. "No Nāyar, unless one utterly degraded by
the exigencies of a Government office, would eat his
782 food without having bathed and changed his cloth. It
783 is a rule seldom broken that every Nāyar goes to the
[512] temple to pray at least once a day after having bathed;
generally twice a day. The mere approach anywhere
[564] near his vicinity of a Cheruman, a Pulayan, or any
inferior being, even a Tiyan, as he walks to his house
from the temple, cleansed in body and mind, his marks
newly set on his forehead with sandal-wood paste, is
pollution, and he must turn and bathe again ere he
[683] can enter his house and eat. Buchanan tells us that in
his time, about a century ago, the man of inferior caste
thus approaching a Nāyar would be cut down instantly
[656] with a sword; there would be no words. Now that
the people of India are inconvenienced with an Arms
[671] Act which inhibits sword play of this kind, and with a
[178] law system under which high and low are rated alike,
the Nāyar has to content himself with an imperious
grunt-like shout for the way to be cleared for him
as he stalks on imperturbed. His arrogance is not
diminished, but he cannot now show it in quite [illegible]
same way.

796 "I will attempt a description of the ceremonial
[773] observed at the Pishāri kāvu—the Pishāri temple near
Quilandy on the coast 15 miles north of Calicut, where
Bhagavati is supposed in vague legend to have slain
an Āsura or gigantic ogre, in commemoration of which

796 of drums, and cannonade of the little mortars. All those
who are present are supposed to be fed from the temple.
[564] There is a large crowd. On the morning of the fifth
day, a man of the washerman (Vannān) caste will
[203] announce to the neighbours by beat of tom-tom that
[788] there will be a procession of Bhagavati issuing from the
794 gates of the temple, and passing round about. Like all
those who are in any way connected with the temple,
796 this man's office is hereditary, and he lives to a small
564 extent on the bounty of the temple, *i.e.*, he holds a little
[428] land on nominal terms from the temple property, in
[425] consideration for which he must fulfil certain requirements for the temple, as on occasions of festivals. His office also invests him with certain rights in the community. In the afternoon of the fifth day, the Vannān and a Manūtan, the one following the other, bring two umbrellas to the temple; the former bringing one of cloth, and the latter one of cadjan (palm leaves). I am not sure whether the cloth umbrella has been in the possession of the Vannān, but think it has. At all events, when he brings it to the temple, it is in thorough repair—a condition for which he is responsible. The cadjan umbrella is a new one. Following these two as they walk solemnly, each with his umbrella, is a large crowd. There are processions of Bhagavati on the elephant encircling the temple thrice in the morning, at
[326] noon, and at night. Early on the sixth day, the headman of the Mukkuvans (fishermen), who by virtue of his headship is called the Arayan, together with the blacksmith and the goldsmith, comes to the temple followed by a crowd, but accompanied by no orchestra of drums. To the Arayan is given half a sack of rice for himself and his followers. A silver umbrella belonging to the temple is handed over to him, to be used when

796
he comes to the temple again in the evening. To the 794
blacksmith is given the temple sword. The goldsmith 564
receives the silver umbrella from the Arayan, and [326].
executes any repairs that may be needful, and, in like
manner, the blacksmith looks to the sword. In the
afternoon, the headman of the Tiyans, called the Tandān, [482]
comes to the temple followed by two of his castemen [782]
carrying slung on a pole over their shoulders three
bunches of young cocoanuts—an appropriate offering, the
Tiyans being those whose ordinary profession is climbing
the cocoanut palm, drawing the toddy, securing the
cocoanuts, etc. This time there will be loud drumming,
and a large crowd with the Tandān, and in front of him
are men dancing, imitating sword play with sticks and
shields, clanging the shields, pulling at bows as if firing
off imaginary arrows, the while shouting and yelling
madly. Then come the blacksmith and the goldsmith [326]
with the sword. Following comes the Arayan with the
silver umbrella to the accompaniment of very noisy
drumming, in great state under a canopy of red cloth held
lengthways by two men, one before, the other behind.
The procession of Bhagavati continues throughout the
night, and ceases at daybreak. These six days of the 796
festival are called Vilākku. A word about the drumming. 534
The number of instrumentalists increases as the festival
goes on, and on the last day I counted fifty, all Nāyars.
The instruments were the ordinary tom-tom, a skin
stretched tight over one side of a circular wooden band,
about 1½ feet in diameter and 2 or 3 inches in width,
and the common long drum much narrower at the ends
than in the middle; and there were (I think) a few of
those narrow in the middle, something like an hourglass
cut short at both ends. They are beaten with
curved drum sticks, thicker at the end held in the hand.

534
796 The accuracy with which they were played on, never a
[533] wrong note although the rhythm was changed perpetually,
was truly amazing. And the crescendo and
diminuendo, from a perfect fury of wildness to the
gentlest pianissimo, was equally astonishing, especially
796 when we consider the fact that there was no visible
794 leader of this strange orchestra. Early on the seventh
564 and last day, when the morning procession is over, there
comes to the temple a man of the Pānan caste (umbrella-
[293] makers and devil-dancers). He carries a small cadjan
umbrella which he has made himself, adorned all round
the edges with a fringe of the young leaves of the
cocoanut palm. His approach is heralded and noised
just as in the case of the others on the previous day.
The umbrella should have a long handle, and, with it in
his hand, he performs a dance before the temple. The
temple is situated within a hollow square enclosure,
which none in caste below the Nāyar is permitted to
enter. To the north, south, east, and west, there is a
level entrance into the hollow square, and beyond this
entrance no man of inferior caste may go. The Pānan
receives about 10 lbs. of raw rice for his performance.
In the afternoon, a small crowd of Vettuvars come to
the temple, carrying with them swords, and about ten
small baskets made of cocoanut palm leaves, containing
[422] salt. These baskets are carried slung on a pole. The
[685] use of salt here is obscure.* I remember a case of a
Nāyar's house having been plundered, the idol knocked
[578] down, and salt put in the place where it should have
[786] stood. The act was looked on as most insulting. The
Vettuvans dance and shout in much excitement, cutting
their heads with their own swords in their frenzy. Some

---

* The Vettuvans were once salt-makers.

794

of them represent devils or some kind of inferior evil 796
spirits, and dance madly under the influence of the 564
spirits which they represent. Then comes the Arayan [326]
as on the previous day with his little procession, and
lastly comes the blacksmith with the sword. The pro-
cession in the evening is a great affair. Eight elephants, 796
which kept line beautifully, took part in it when I wit- 231
nessed it. One of them, very handsomely caparisoned, 788
had on its back a priest (Mūssad) carrying a sword [793]
smothered in garlands of red flowers representing the
goddess. The elephant bearing the priest is bedizened
on the forehead with two golden discs, one on each
side of the forehead, and over the centre of the forehead
hangs a long golden ornament. These discs on the
elephant's forehead are common in Malabar in affairs of
ceremony. The Māppilla poets are very fond of com- [538]
paring a beautiful girl's breasts to these cup-like discs.
The elephant bears other jewels, and over his back is a
large canopy-like red cloth richly wrought. Before the [411]
elephant walked a Nāyar carrying in his right hand
in front of him a sword of the kind called nāndakam
smeared with white (probably sandal) paste. To its
edge, at intervals of a few inches, are fastened tiny bells,
so that, when it is shaken, there is a general jingle.
Just before the procession begins, there is something 796
for the Tiyans to do. Four men of this caste having 564
with them pūkalasams (flower kalasams), and five 794
having jannakalasams, run along the west, north, and 778
east sides of the temple outside the enclosure, shouting
and making a noise more like the barking of dogs than
anything else. The kalasams contain arrack (liquor), [273]
which is given to the temple to be used in the cere-
monies. Members of certain families only are allowed [465]
to perform in this business, and for what they do each

564
794

796 man receives five edangālis of rice from the temple, and
[465] a small piece of the flesh of the goat which is sacrificed
later. These nine men eat only once a day during the
[834] festival; they do no work, remaining quietly at home
[841] unless when at the temple; they cannot approach any one
of caste lower than their own; they cannot cohabit with
women; and they cannot see a woman in menstruation
during these days. A crowd of Tiyans join more or
less in this, rushing about and barking like dogs, making
a hideous noise. They too have kalasams, and, when
they are tired of rushing and barking, they drink the
arrack in them. These men are always under a vow.
[782] In doing what they do, they fulfil their vow for the
benefit they have already received from the goddess—
796 cure from sickness as a rule. To the west of the
564 temple is a circular pit—it was called the fire-pit, but
there was no fire in it—and this pit all the Tiyan women
of the neighbourhood circumambulate, passing from
west round by north, three times, holding on the head
a pewter plate, on which are a little rice, bits of plantain
leaves and cocoanut, and a burning wick. As each
woman completes her third round, she stands for a
moment at the western side, facing east, and throws the
[782] contents of the plate into the pit. She then goes to the
western gate of the enclosure, and puts down her plate
for an instant while she makes profound salaam to the
796 goddess ere going away. Now the procession starts
776 out from the temple, issuing from the northern gate,
788 and for a moment confronts a being so strange that he
demands description. Of the many familiar demons of
the Malayālis, the two most intimate are Kuttichchāttan
and Gulikan, who are supposed to have assisted Kāli
(who is scarcely the Kāli of Brāhmanism) in overcoming the Āsura, and on the occasion of this festival these

796 dance, round by south to the westward, and, leaving
788 the enclosure, proceeds to a certain banyan tree, under
776 which is a high raised platform built up with earth
536 and stones. Preceding the procession at a distance of
796 fifty yards are the nine men of the Tiyan caste men-
564 tioned already, carrying kalasams on their heads, and a
788 crowd of women of the same caste, each one carrying
a pewter plate, larger than the plates used when encircling the fire pit, on which are rice, etc., and the burning wick as before. The plate and its contents are on this occasion, as well as before, called talapōli. I could not make out that anything in particular is done at the banyan tree, and the procession soon returns to the temple, the nine men and the Tiyan women following,
[782] carrying their kalasams and talapōli. On the way, a
number of cocks are given in sacrifice by people under a vow. In the procession are a number of devil-dancers, garlanded with white flowers of the pagoda tree mixed with red, jumping, gesticulating, and shouting, in an avenue of the crowd in front of the elephant bearing the sword. The person under a vow holds the cock towards one of these devil-dancers, who, never ceasing his gyrations and contortions, presently seizes its head, wrings
[755] it off, and flings it high in the air. The vows which
are fulfilled by this rude decapitation of cocks have been made in order to bring about cure for some ailment. The procession passes through the temple yard from west to east, and proceeds half a mile to a banyan tree, under which, like the other, there is a high raised platform. When passing by the temple, the Tiyan women empty the contents of their plates in the fire pit as before, and the nine men hand over the arrack in their kalasams to the temple servants. Let me note here the curious distribution of the rice which is heaped in the fire pit.

Two-thirds of it go to the four Tiyans who carried the 796
pūkalasams, and one-third to the five who carried the 564
jannakalasams. Returning to the procession, we find 788
it at the raised platform to the east of the temple. On [804]
this platform have been placed already an ordinary bamboo quart-like measure of paddy (unhusked rice), and one of rice, each covered with a plantain leaf. The principal devil-dancer takes a handful of rice and paddy, and flings it all around. The procession then visits in turn the gates of the gardens of the four owners of the temple. At each is a measure of rice and a measure of paddy covered with plantain leaves, with a small lamp or burning wick beside them, and the devil-dancer throws a handful towards the house. The procession then finds its way to a tree to the west, under which, on the platform, is now a measure of paddy and a lamp. Some Brāhmans repeat mantrams, and the elephant, the priest on his back and the sword in his hand, all three are supposed to tremble violently. Up to this time the procession has moved leisurely at a very slow march. Now, starting suddenly, it proceeds at a run to the temple, where the priest descends quickly from the elephant, and is taken inside the temple by the Mūssad priests. He, who has been carrying the sword all this time, places it on the sill of the door of the room in which
it is kept for worship, and prostrates before it. The [778]
sword then shakes itself for fifteen minutes, until the chief priest stays its agitation by sprinkling on it some tirtam fluid made sacred by having been used for anointing
the image of the goddess. This done, the chief amongst 796
the devil-dancers will, with much internal tumult as well 787
as outward convolutions, say in the way of oracle whether the dêvi has been pleased with the festival in her honour, or not. As he pronounces this oracular utterance, he falls

796

is supremely secret. Equally so is that which follows. 789
The carcass of one goat will be taken out of the temple 782
by the northern door to the north side of the temple, 793
and from this place one of the temple servants, who is
blindfolded, drags it three times round the temple, the
Mūssads following closely, repeating their mantrams, the
drummer in front beating his drum softly with his fingers.
The drummer dare not look behind him, and does not know [534]
what is being done. After the third round, the drummer
and the temple servant go away, and the three Mūssads
cook some of the flesh of the goats and one or two of
the cocks (or a part of one) with rice. This rice, when
cooked, is taken to the kāvu (grove) to the north of the
temple, and there the Mūssads again ply their mantrams.
As each mantram is ended, a handful of saffron (turmeric) [533]
powder is flung on the rice, and all the time the drummer,
who by this time has returned, keeps up an obligato
pianissimo with his drum, using his fingers. He faces
the north, and the priests face the south. Presently the
priests run (not walk) once round the temple, carrying
the cooked rice, and scattering it wide as they go, repeating
mantrams. They enter the temple, and remain
within until daybreak. No one can leave the temple
until morning comes. Before daybreak, the temple is
thoroughly swept and cleaned, and then the Mūssads go
out, and the five Nambūtiris again enter before sunrise,
and perform the ordinary worship thrice in the day, for
this day only. The next morning, the Mūssad priests
return and resume their duties. Beyond noting that the 796
weirdness of the human tumult, busy in its religious 564
effusion, is on the last night enhanced by fireworks, [541]
mere description of the scene of the festival will not be
attempted, and such charming adjuncts of it as the
gallery of pretty Nāyar women looking on from the

796
564 garden fence at the seething procession in the lane below
[793] must be left to the imagination. It will have been
noticed that the Nambūtiris hold aloof from the festival; they purify the temple before and after, but no more.
796 The importance attached to the various offices of those
793 who are attached to the temple by however slender
577 a thread, was illustrated by a rather amusing squabble between two of the Mukkuvans, an uncle and nephew, as to which of them should receive the silver umbrella from the temple, and bear it to the house of the goldsmith to be repaired. During the festival, one of them made a rapid journey to the Zamorin (about fifty miles distant), paid some fees, and established himself as the senior who had the right to carry the umbrella.

796 "An important local festival is that held near Palghat,
184 in November, in the little suburb Kalpāti inhabited entirely by Pattar Brāhmans from the east. But it is not a true Malayāli festival, and it suffices to mention its existence, for it in no way represents the religion of the Nāyar. The dragging of cars, on which are placed the images of deities, common everywhere from the temple of Jagganath at Pūri in Orissa to Cape Comorin, is quite unknown in Malabar, excepting only at Kalpāti, which is close to the eastern frontier of Malabar.

782 "Near Chowghāt (Chavagāt), about 30 miles to the
[131] southward of Calicut, on the backwater, at a place called
[346] Guruvayūr, is a very important temple, the property of
[635] the Zamorin, yielding a very handsome revenue. I visited
the festival on one occasion, and purchase was made of
[126] a few offerings such as are made to the temple in satis-
[532] faction of vows—a very rude representation of an infant
in silver, a hand, a leg, an ulcer, a pair of eyes, and, most curious of all, a silver string which represents a man, the giver. Symbolization of the offering of self is made by

a silver string as long as the giver is tall. Goldsmiths 782 working in silver and gold are to be seen just outside the [326] gate of the temple, ready to provide at a moment's notice the object any person intends to offer, in case he is not already in possession of his votive offering. The subject of vows can be touched on but incidentally here. A vow is made by one desiring offspring, to have his hand or leg cured, to have an ulcer cured, to fulfil any desire whatsoever, and he decides in solemn affirmation to himself to give a silver image of a child, a silver leg, and so on, in the event of his having fulfilment of his desire.

"A true Malayâli festival is that held at Kottiyūr in 796 North Malabar, in the forest at the foot of the Wynād hills rising 3,000 to 5,000 feet from the sides of the little glade where it is situated. It is held in July during the height of the monsoon rain. Though it is a festival for high and low, these do not mix at Kottiyūr. The Nāyars [564] go first, and after a few days, the Nāyars having done, the Tiyans, and so on. A curious feature of it is that the people going to attend it are distinctly rowdy, feeling that they have a right to abuse in the vilest and filthiest terms everyone they see on the way—perhaps a few days' march. And not only do they abuse to their hearts' content in their exuberant excitement, but they use personal violence to person and property all along the road. They return like lambs. At Kottiyūr one sees [346] a temple of Īsvara, there called Perumāl (or Perumāl Īsvara) by the people, a low thatched building forming a hollow square, in the centre of which is the shrine, which I was not permitted to see. There were some [793] Nambūtiri priests, who came out, and entered into conversation. The festival is not held at the temple, but in the forest about a quarter of a mile distant. This spot [778] is deemed extremely sacred and dreadful. There was, inconceivably desolate and dreary; but during the month 796 Edavam (May-June) upwards of 50,000 Nāyars and 788 Tiyans from all parts of Malabar throng the shrine for the twenty-eight days of the annual festival. During the rest of the year, the temple is given up to the revels of Siva and Parvati, and the impious Hindu who dares to intrude is consumed instantly to ashes. The two great ceremonies are the Neyyāttam and the Elanīrāttam, the pouring of ghee (clarified butter) and the pouring of the milk of the green cocoanut. The former is performed [564] by the Nāyars, who attend the festival first, and the latter by Tiyans. In May, all roads lead to Kottiyūr, [785] and towards the middle of the month the ghee pourers, as the Nāyar pilgrims are called, who have spent the [783] previous four weeks in fasting and purificatory rites, assemble in small shrines subordinate to the Kottiyūr temple. Thence, clad in white, and bearing each upon his head a pot of ghee, they set forth in large bodies headed by a leader. At Manattana the pilgrims from all parts of Malabar meet, and thence to Kottiyūr the procession is unbroken. However long their journey, [195] the pilgrims must eat only once, and the more filthy their language, the more orthodox is their conduct. As many as five thousand pots of ghee are poured over the lingam every year. After the Neyyāttam ceremony, the Nāyars depart, and it is the turn of the Tiyans. Their preparations are similar to those of the Nāyars, and their language *en route* is even more startling. Eruvatti near Kadirūr is the place where most of them [782] assemble for their pilgrimage, and their green cocoanuts are presented gratis by the country people as an offering to the temple. The Elanīrāttam ceremony begins at midnight, and the pilgrims heap up their cocoanuts in front of the shrine continuously till the evening of the

opprobrium at her house. The chief of the fisherman 796
caste, styled Kūli Muttatta Arayan, has the privilege of 788
being the first to begin the work of polluting the Bhoot 184
or shrine. Into other particulars it is unnecessary [564]
to enter. Cocks are slaughtered and sacrificed. The [782]
worshipper gets flowers only, and no holy water after
paying his vows. Instead of water, he proceeds outside
and drinks arrack or toddy, which an attendant Nāyar
serves out. All castes are free to go, including Tiyars [564]
and low caste people. The temple was originally only
a Bhoot or holy tree with a platform. The image in
the temple is said to have been introduced only of
recent years.' It is a pity Mr. Logan is so reticent.
My information is that the headman of the Mukkuvans
opens the festival by solemnly making a fæcal deposit
on the image. Here again there is the same strange
union of everything that is filthy, abusive, foul and
irreverent, with every mode of expressing the deepest
religious feeling."

Of the cock festival at Cranganore, the following 796
account is given by Mr. T. K. Gopal Panikkar* in his 778
interesting little book on Malabar and its folk. "In 776
the midst of its native charms is situated a temple
dedicated to Kali, the goddess who presides over the
infectious diseases, cholera and small-pox. She is a [753]
virgin goddess, whom no quantity of blood will satisfy.
The temple is an old-fashioned one, presenting no
striking architectural peculiarities. The priestly classes [564]
attached to it are not, as usual, Brāhmins, but a peculiar [795]
sect called Adigals, of whom there are but three families [793]
in the whole of Malabar. The Brāhmins are purposely
excluded from participation in the poojah ceremonies,

---

* Malabar and its Folk, Madras, 1900.

they might become a prey to these ravenous demons. 788
In short, the Bharani day inaugurates a reign of terror 796
in the locality, lasting for these seven days. Afterwards, [776]
all the dirt is removed. The temple is cleansed and [783]
sanctified, and again left open to public worship. The
pilgrims return, but not in the same manner in which
they repaired thither. During the backward journey,
no obscene songs or expressions are indulged in.
They are to come back quietly and calmly, without any
kind of demonstrations. They get back to their respec- [431]
tive homes, and distribute the sandals and other pujah
substances to their relations and friends who have
elected to remain at home; and the year's pilgrimage
is brought to a close."

"The month Karkkatakam," Mr. Fawcett writes, 526
"when the Malayālis say the body is cool, is the time 875
when, according to custom, the Nāyar youths practice 564
physical exercises. At Payōli in North Malabar, when
I was there in 1895, the local instructor of athletics was
a Paravan, a mason by caste. As he had the adjunct
Kurup to his name, it took some time to discover the
fact. Teachers of his ilk are invariably of the Paravan
caste, and, when they are believed to be properly
accomplished, they are given the honorific Kurup. So
carefully are things regulated that no other person was
permitted to teach athletics within the amsham (a local
area, a small county), and his womenfolk had privileges,
they only being the midwives who could attend on the
Nāyar women of the amsham. His fee for a course
of exercises for the month was ten rupees. He, and
some of his pupils, gave an exhibition of their quality.
Besides bodily contortions and somersaults, practiced in 526
a long low-roofed shed having a sandy floor, there is
play with the following instruments :—watta ; cheruvadi,

6:Spate N-4 (no date)1954 AW1 India

Kanada AW10
Kerala AW11

Ka
471
339

with an output of 5–600 m. tiles a year; local sailing coasters supply markets from Karachi to Colombo, and there is some export via Bombay to E Africa, Persia, and Malaya. But competition from Malabar and, much more serious from cement and asbestos roofing is adversely affecting the industry, which appears to be declining.[40] Other industries are of little importance: iron-founding (ancillary to the tile factories), and soap, based on local and imported copra; Mangalore is the main port for the Laccadive islanders. A feature of some interest is the prominence of Portuguese names among the larger concerns, both in coffee-curing and in tile-making.

Ke
161
563
564

Kerala

Both physically and culturally Kerala is one of the most distinctive regions of India.[41] Historically it has been somewhat isolated from the rest of the Peninsula, but accessible to maritime influences. Homogeneous in speech, it is probably more caste-divided than any other area, and it is here that 'untouchability' developed the more fantastic extremes of 'unapproachability' and even 'unseeability', while the Nairs who form the bulk of the minor gentry preserve a matrilinear organisation in which both polygamy and polyandry play a part.[42] Perhaps by reaction against caste, the region has the highest percentage of Christians in all India—28·8 in Cochin and 32·3 in Travancore. This element long antedates the vigorous Portuguese missions, which succeeded in bringing into the Roman fold most of the 'Syrian' (i.e. Nestorian) Christians, whose traditions go back to St Thomas the Apostle; there were Christian communities 1500 years ago. The 'White Jews' of Cochin are another ancient fossil kith; their number is only a few hundreds, but their origin is claimed to be from a Solomonic colony and is undoubtedly very ancient. But there is no end to the ethnographical fascinations of Kerala.

Ke
133

The Physical Setting

Tokens of uplift are numerous and decisive, including the existence of coral reefs below the alluvium some miles from the present coast.[43]

---

[40] U. Hammaba, *ibid.*, 291–99.

[41] Based mainly on a series of papers by G. Kuriyan in *JMGA* and *IGJ*: "The Industrial Crops of Kerala" (XI (1937), 283–90 and XII (1937), 1–8); "Population and its Distribution in K." (XIII (1938), 125–46); "The Geographic Basis of the Legendary Origin of K." (XVI (1941), 340–54); "Some Aspects of the Regional Geography of K." (XVII (1942), 1–41). On Cochin I am indebted for first-hand information to Sir Robert Bristow, CIE, to whom the development of the modern port is largely due.

[42] The best easily accessible account for geographers is in C. D. Forde, *Habitat, Economy and Society* (1934 and later eds.), Ch. XIII. See also G. Slater, *Southern India* (1936), Chs. XVI–XVII.

[43] Legend ascribes the formation of Kerala to the impatience of a local saint ("during the thousandth year after the [biblical] flood") with the unspecified improprieties of his aged mother. He threw an axe from Gokarna (near Goa) over the sea; it flew to Cape Comorin and the sea retreated beneath its flight. This does correspond with the actual area of emergence.

342 From the portico, you go direct into a big hall in the middle of which is a big yard paved with granite; this yard is exposed to the sky. On one side of the hall—right or left—are situated two or three rooms, from one of which you are taken to upstairs rooms which are also connected with the portico. On the portico side of the hall are the kitchen, bath-room, and a few more rooms which are utilized for various purposes. In another place of the compound is an outhouse in which Brahmans are asked to perform worship.* Near this house is a tank and a well. The house itself possesses a well near it for the exclusive use of the inmates.

But educated Nayars now-a-days build their houses on different plans.

361 *Preliminary.*—Watakanchery is a Government division, rather than a true village, being marked out merely for convenience of revenue assessment. It stretches from east to west a distance of nearly four miles along the foot of a hill. A water-course which runs from east to west forms the northern boundary; the maximum distance from north to south is nearly a mile and a half. The whole area is 3,692·64 acres (nearly 5½ square miles). It is an area containing a few groups of houses intersected by paddy fields and "parambas," i.e., land on which paddy cultivation is not undertaken.

Watakanchery proper, or the town of Watakanchery, as it is called in the village accounts, is at the easternmost boundary of the Government village area and is the headquarters of the taluk containing all the public offices. Two tracts of land, one inhabited by Mappillas (Muhammadans) and another by Syrian Christians (locally known as Nasranees, i.e., Nazarenes) are included in the "town" of Watakanchery from the contiguous areas of the adjoining Government villages on the north and south respectively. Its area is 1½ square miles.

The Taluk of Talapilli contains 74 such "villages" divided solely for revenue purposes. In the "town" Brahmans live in great numbers, while the lower castes occupy the rest of the village area. This block I shall designate Watakanchery (T) and the whole area Watakanchery (V) in the following.

162 *Population.*--Watakanchery (T) has about 2,000 inhabitants;
[779] Watakanchery (V) about 4,000. Watakanchery (T) contains within
564 its limits three religions—Hindus in the centre and Mappillas (Muhammadans) and Christians to the north and south, respectively. Among the Hindus the Brahmans form the majority in the "town," while there are a few "vocational" castes such as barbers, goldsmiths, etc., and a few Nayars. Though the term "castes" is in strictness to be applied to Hindus alone the Mappillas and Christians are regarded as two other castes. The Mappillas and the Christians cannot touch the Hindu caste-people without polluting them, while there are castes within the Hindu fold itself, such as carpenters, goldsmiths, masons, Cherumas (vide below), Eluvas, etc., who are
[113] kept at a distance of a specified number of feet by the higher castes. There is a full and interesting study of the tribes and castes in Mr. L. K. Anandakrishna Iyer's "Cochin Tribes and Castes." The Hindus however form the majority.

---

[778] * [In Nayar houses, I am informed by Mr. L. K. Anandakrishna Iyer, this shrine is sacred to the cobra, to whom worship must be given by a Nambudri Brahman, as otherwise the Nayars are bitten. This belief may be the cause of the subjection imposed on Nayars by Nambudris, particularly in relation to Nayar women.—Ed.]

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AW1 India

Kerala AW11

566 [462] work connected with the harvesting, separating the paddy from the stalks, etc. They are employed as a rule throughout the year by their masters; in leisure days however they are paid a little less than the stated wage.

[262] They take kanji (rice boiled in water) and toddy in the morning, toddy in the afternoon, cooked rice at night; they eat also fish and flesh. They behave well, are obedient and honest and loyal to their masters, very earnest about their work, but are completely illiterate. There are no schools for them in the village.
[778] [796] They worship spirits in the shape of stocks and stones; and on the occasion of the festivals of their Gods and Goddesses they take a good dose of toddy and with drums and bugles and priests dance in the premises of the 'temple'.

•564 There are sub-divisions among the Pulayas, Cherumas, Paraiyas, Nayadis, Malayas and others, who form separate castes among themselves and are restricted in their intercourse with one another.

[361] The Cherumas dwell in colonies of two or three families each, in low, small thatched huts near the land of their masters. It must be admitted that they are not treated properly by the high caste Hindus, though they form the backbone of agricultural labour in these parts. They are low paid and underfed and treated with contempt and sometimes with harshness by the other castes and their masters. It is a wonder that they still cherish obedience to their masters and earnestness in their work. There are a few who try to get rid of the yoke by running away, but the majority are contented and stay with their masters. They are experts in practical agricultural work and can face any sort of weather.

311 *Land and Occupation of land—*

	ACRES.
Area of wet lands	653·24
" dry lands	937·21
" lands watered by wells	...
" common waste	18·81
Pasture other than common waste	33·94
Woods and forests	1,912·35
Fruit trees and scattered shade trees ...	301·48

312 There are altogether five public tanks in the village, most of which are not used for irrigation purposes at all, but for bathing, which is done by all at least once a day. There are no public wells. The cultivation of rice solely depends on the rains of the South-West Monsoon (June—September) which are copious, and of the North-East Monsoon in November. Every house however contains a well, from which water is drawn for drinking purposes and for watering the compound gardens in the summer. Water can be obtained at a very slight depth in most parts except at the foot of the hills. The sides of the tanks, usually not very large in size, are paved step by step with granite or laterite stones by which people can step down into the water for bathing. Water is lifted from the wells by means of pots for drinking purposes, but for watering gardens lifts of various sorts are used.

406 The water wheel, which costs about Rs. 35, is very rarely used except in *kol* fields where water has to be lifted out of the land.

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AW1 India

Kerala AW11

435 Site values of land for building are getting higher and higher in the 'town', chiefly because the Shoranur-Cochin Railway now runs through this place, the principal offices of the taluk are here, and a high school has just been opened. Rs. 500 per acre may be paid in the 'town'; Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 in the rest of the village area. But the best wet land fetches up to Rs. 1,500 per acre. Cultivable land fetches far higher prices than building land, because only land unfit for cultivation, of which there is enough, is used for building.

423 The practice of exchanging lands is unknown. Generally,
though not always, holdings are continuous. Field huts, built in
[343] the midst of their fields, are often used by big farmers. The seeds,
the harvested paddy and other crops, the stock, the implements,
etc., are kept there.

296 *Subsidiary industries.*—Weaving is not practised. In the north-eastern part of the State, however, handloom weaving of an exquisite sort and also of a rough character is practised.

285 Mat-weaving of an exquisite pattern out of certain reeds duly
coloured is practised by a set of people locally known as 'Koravas.'
735 The condition of these men, however, is miserable. They have no
capital, no organization or culture, but usually make their wares to
order, though now and then a few enterprising middlemen avail
[787] themselves of these people's skill. They talk a jargon of Tamil
and Malayalam, and their females, like gipsies, beg from house to
[791] house and profess themselves to be adepts in palmistry. They
make mats costing from Re. 1 to Rs. 15 or Rs. 20. They yet live
from hand to mouth; and I have my doubts whether they will be
able to keep up their skill unless knowing people help to raise
their economic condition.

564 Every village moreover contains within its borders the following
castes who follow their hereditary crafts:—the Marasari
(carpenter), Kallasari (mason), Tattan (goldsmith), Musari (brazier),
Kollan (blacksmith), and Tolkollan (leather-worker). There are a
few families of each of these castes in Watakanchery also. "As
their services are much in requisition and as they earn better wages
than unskilled labourers, they are still engaged in their hereditary
occupation. The first five groups are socially in a par with each
other. They all interdine, but do not intermarry. But the
Tolkollans are considered inferior in status to the rest and cannot
touch them without causing pollution, probably on account of their
[595] work in leather which in its raw state is considered impure.
Polyandry of the fraternal type was prevalent among them, several
brothers marrying one wife and the children being treated as
common to all. This practice however is fast dying out, if it has
[783] not already done so." (Census Reports.) One special feature in
the caste-hierarchy is that these people are made to stand at a
specified distance while approaching the higher castes (24 feet is
the rule).

466 These castes minister to the every day needs of the community,
executing their work generally to order. As they are very poor,
they cannot afford to work on their own account on a commercial
326 scale. The village usually contains a recognized *desa-asari* (village
smith) to whom the farmers pay a certain amount of paddy at the
harvesting season of the year for the repair of their implements.
None but the village-smith is entitled to this dole. These may
entertain apprentices from their own caste-people, though the

178 426 The increase in the number of families must not be taken for a sign of prosperity. I have sought out its causes. It has both a social and an economic cause. The breaking up of the old 'Tharvads' into small homesteads, owing to want of harmony among the members, mismanagement of property due to ignorance and rank illiteracy, growing indebtedness of the once rich Tharvads to the local money-lenders or the landlord, are the causes of the downfall of the great Tharvads of old which half a century ago were gracing this desam; the stories yet current in those parts of men of high worth and talents who belonged to them, and the occasional ruined foundations of their family houses alone remain. Indeed joint families have almost all broken up and the Tharvad properties all absorbed by the local 'Jenmis.' The people are day by day being reduced to want and dependence on the landlord and the creditor.

● 564 The desam cannot be called a 'caste' desam strictly speaking. There are no separate quarters allotted on the basis of caste difference. In spite of the rigorous observance of the 'system of pollution' between caste and caste, peculiar to the Malabar country, all castes hold lands, work, and have families promiscuously throughout the land. For example, every landholding farmer, who is usually a Nayar, has in his family precincts (indeed far enough away to be out of reach of pollution) small homesteads of his labourers who are generally Cherumas or Pulayas * by caste.

There are—

3	Brahman	families	... 24	individuals.
3	Ambalavasi	"	... 36	"
137	Nayar	"	... 956	"
85	Tiyya	"	... 584	"
80	Cheruma	"	.. 390	"
24	Muhammadan	"	... 27	"
1	Christian family		... 6	"

[463] The *Tiyya* class includes the families of the artisans—'Asari' (carpenter—two families), 'Karuvan' (blacksmith—one family), 'Kollan' (shoemaker—two families), 'Thattan' (goldsmith—one family), 'Mannan' (washerman of the lower class—one family), 'Panikkan' (stone-mason—one family).

Children living	642	
" dead	188	Born within the last ten years.
" born lifeless	67	

Children below ten are alone included in this. This has been ascertained by enquiry among the mothers.

342 Homesteads number 266. The homesteads of the villagers are miserable looking and squalid, frequently being only mud hovels of eight by five feet, more or less. Not more than 40 houses out of 333 are houses worthy of the name. The rest are simply hovels, often the very picture of poverty and famine.

---

* Between these two depressed castes there are only minute differences.

VATANAMKURUSSI VILLAGE (WALLUVANAD TALUK).

[*By N. Sundara Aiyar, Presidency College, Madras.*]

361 489 *Preliminary.*—The village lies in the interior of the district, thirty miles west of the municipal town of Palghat on the high road that passes from Palghat to Ponnani. It is to the north of the railway line passing from Calicut to Palghat, and about equidistant from the two railway stations of Shoranur and Pattambi on that line (South Indian Railway). It is fifty-four miles south-east (by railway) of the port of Calicut, the capital of the district.

361 131 The village is more or less surrounded by low hills on all sides, and there is a small forest to the east of it. A portion of the village has for its southern boundary the Bharata Puzha (called the Ponnani river, because it joins the sea at Ponnani). The river is of little use for navigation, since it is in flood during the rains and almost dry in summer. The railway passes through the village, for about a mile, though the nearest railway station is 4½ miles distant. The trunk road from Palghat also passes through the middle of the village. The village is roughly in the shape of a triangle with its apex to the north and the base on the south. Being in the midst of hilly country, dry soil abounds in the village, though the few wet acres are comparatively good.

162 *Population.*—The total population of the village in Census years was as follows :—

Year.	Occupied houses.	Males.	Females.	Total.	Hindus.	Muhammadans.
1891 ...	322	1,055	1,134	2,189	2,116	73
1901 ...	369	1,130	1,187	2,317	2,226	91
1911 ...	398	1,210	1,270	2,480	2,373	107

The figures include those of an adjacent small village, of which the total population in 1911 was 124, all Hindus.

564 There are Brahmans and Sudras, the latter split up into a large number of sub-castes and sects like the Nayars, Nambiyars, Menons, Chettis, etc., and the lower classes like the Thiyyas, or Ezhuvans, and the depressed classes of Cherumas, Pariahs and Nayadis. Nayars predominate in the village. There are a few Muhammadans, but no Christians at all.

Of Brahmans there are ten families comprising 60 individuals resident in the village. There are two families of Nambudiri Brahmans with some 30 members.

162 The great majority are Nayars, of whom there are about 150 families with nearly 1,500 individuals. Cherumas may number between 300 and 400, the Thiyyas or Ezhuvans about 500. The chief minor sub-castes in the village are Chettis (34), Kunparars (Potters, about 50), Asaris (Carpenters, 28), Karuvans (blacksmiths, 21), Thattars (goldsmiths, 19), Panans (makers of bamboo and palm leaf umbrellas, 29), Masons (13), Pariahs (42), and five families of Mannans, washermen of the lower classes, who also make mud walls, engage themselves as herdsmen and act as Pujaris, i.e.,

000

of the group with B; they are the claims A has upon *a* and her children being expressed by A's children. It is these claims of the brothers and sisters upon each other which are the fundamental principle Dumont has detected as the common background in South Indian kinship. I am concerned neither with debunking the role of the "alliance" nor with defending the "principle of the unity of siblings," but merely with examining this idea of the "transfer of affinity" from generation to generation. Notice, however, that this formulation permits us to understand the formal customary background of a sister's daughter marriage mentioned in connection with the Brahman. That type of marriage is simply a tightening of the claims in accordance with the emphasis on endogamy and hypergamy in the Brahman caste. A description of the claims between brothers and sisters explains what appears to be a curious phenomenon much more adequately than Dumont's recourse to the "inheritance" of affinity.

To return to general issues: Dumont must be given credit for having detected the uniformity in some fundamental features of South Indian kinship systems, but he has expressed the matter still in lineal terms as an opposition between "kin" and "affines." I suggest that uniformity is better explained in terms of kin categories and the fundamental claims of the brothers and sisters upon each other. This is the reason why we find a centripetal tendency so clearly at work in South India. Smaller and smaller circles of endogamy form purer and purer circles of kin who may be permitted to claim—at least in their own minds—higher ritual status. This also explains the curious aversion, even among the humblest caste, against "mixtures" in their pedigrees.

Our formulation of South Indian kinship draws attention to the shifting character of descent. On the basis of a very similar kin structure, different groups operate various descent preferences: even within the same caste we find some who choose patrilineal descent and some who choose matrilineal descent as distinctive characteristics. It should be clear that the important kin groups are the circles—*curru*—noted by Karve, Banks ("sondakara castes"), and others. Descent is sometimes so secondary that, as Dumont observes, succession and inheritance run counter to descent ideas in numerous castes (1957*b*, p. 20). I would suggest that we have in these low castes a Kandyan preference based on endogamy and bilateral kinship. We shall see, when we turn toward the Malabar coast, that with the development of matrilineal descent, hypergamy again makes its unmistakable appearance.

THE MALABAR COAST

K
121
564
611

In our consideration of South Indian kinship systems we have been concerned, first, to detect an underlying pattern for the bewilderingly

121 complex, contradictory, and difficult material collected by many au-
611 thors, and, second, to test the Ceylon model of the association of hy-
• 564 pergamy with unilineal descent. It will be recalled that Gough's Kumbapettai village seemed to include the variations in kinship found dispersed over a large area in Ceylon. On the Malabar coast, the situation is, if possible, made even more complicated: in this famous region we find every possible variation of our model, from matrilineal hypergamous systems to endogamous and patrilineal hypergamous systems, all existing pell-mell in the same area. In general, it seems clear that these various features are used as structural indices to dis-
[554] tinguish communities from one another. The over-all pattern, by contrast, seems uncluttered: in lower levels of social rank we find, on the whole, endogamous castes which so far as the material goes exhibit the fundamental characteristics of the general structure. In the higher levels of Hindu and Muslim society we find an intense preoccupation with status and social rank, and unilineal descent systems are built out of the general structure. Then, in the limiting cases, each matrilineage behaves as if it were a single unique caste having only hypergamous connections with the outside world.

In this section, I shall first attempt to establish the existence of the general structure in castes in both North and South Malabar, and I shall then go on to examine the questions of descent and hypergamy.
[197] Before we come to specific cases, I should observe that the region ex-
[171] hibits an impressive general cultural uniformity: the language, Malayalam, is very closely related to Tamil; the details of the customs find immediate echoes not only in the material from the rest of South India but among Buddhists in Ceylon as well. Quite apart from struc-
[184] tural matters, there is an intuitive appreciation of the fact that we are in a civilization with a distinctive style of its own in which the different customs of discrete groups appear as permutations and combinations of the same set of general ideas.

101 The term Nayar covers a motley collection of categories of people.
564 Primarily, they are aristocratic Nayar descended from the important royal houses of Cochin and Travancore. There are also people of servant castes who have allegedly taken on the Nayar title in the last century and are only Nayar by courtesy. Some of these categories may be fully endogamous and others, at the higher levels, hypergamous. Though there are again uniformities, it is important to specify which
613 group of Nayar are being considered. The word *taravad,* used by various castes in Malabar, denotes a group of matrilineally related persons with the same name who observe rules of exogamy. The *taravad* may be split into smaller property-holding groups, each with a head *Karanavan.*[7]

---

[7] "One who 'acts' ": comp. *Karanava,* "to do" in Sinhalese.

4: Yalman E-4,5 (1954-1956) 1971 AX4 Sinhalese
Kerala AW11

NORTH TIYYAR

The organization of kinship among the Tiyyar is so similar to the 121
Nayar castes that an extended discussion is unnecessary. Gough ob- 591
serves a difference of degree in the question of the locality of mar- 60 [564]
riage: whereas Nayar men may return to the lands of their MB and [114]
marry there, the Tiyyar tend to be grouped together in patrilocal
clusters, except that there are some among them who also return to
live with their MB (1961, p. 409). These slight differences are unlikely
to be of great significance, for the reader should recall that many of
these marriages take place in the same village or area, that in this
region houses and huts are easy to build and that Nayar men tend to
build houses for their wives and children as well.

In Gough's writings the similarity of the kin structure between the 60
Tiyyar and the Sinhalese is particularly evident. The claims of the 171
cross-cousins upon each other, the categorical Dravidian terminology,
the nature of the marriage tie, and the various details of custom clearly
indicate that we are dealing with the same cultural idiom.

The claims of the MB and FZ are manifested in *rites de passage*. In 604
the *tali* ceremony (which is the well-known prepuberty rite in this 588
area) both these persons appear, and the FZ (or MB wife) ties the
tali as a "potential mother-in-law" (Gough, 1955*a*, p. 58).

The role of the cross-cousins is perhaps more revealing. "The cross- 605
cousin's claim to become a girl's husband . . . must be met at the 582
. . . marriage ceremony if the girl marries some other man. As the 585
couple leave the house, the girl's cross-cousin steps forward in mock
attack . . . He is bought off by the bridegroom with a nominal fee
and the couple then pass unmolested" (Gough, 1955*a*, p. 59).[8] This [171]
symbolic statement is identical to the Sinhalese, where the cross-cousin
stops the bridal couple at the gate and demands his rights. He is given
one hundred betel leaves and the couple moves on.

The Tiyyar of Cochin

It is intriguing to study the kin structure of the Tiyyar caste South 564 611
Malabar and Cochin—the same term as in North Malabar—which 591

---

[8] There is an interesting contradiction in Gough's materal: though she writes of the similarity of the Nayar and the Tiyyar, she notes that with the Tiyyar the MBS (i.e., FZD) is the correct marriage partner (1955*a*, p. 57), whereas with the Nayar the FZS (i.e., MBD) is considered the rightful claimant (1961, p. 398). In view of Dumont's discussion it would be interesting to know whether significant preferences are involved. Gough does not pursue the matter, but given the contradictions involved in patrilateral cross-cousin marriage (e.g., it cannot be combined with hypergamy rules) it is likely that Gough is merely using a shorthand formula for symmetrical cross-cousin marriage. [114]

4: Yalman E-4,5 (1954-1956) 1971 AX4 Sinhalese
Kerala AW11

564 here turns out to be patrilineal and patrilocal. We shall see that, as
611 usual, the question of descent is attached to the same general structures
[591] as elsewhere.

We first note that the "patrilineage" of the South is called a *taravad*
613 like the matrilineal units of the Nayar. The patrilineage is reported to be exogamous with a depth of five to seven generations united by the
595 worship of lineage gods, ancestors, and snakes. Marriage tends to be patrilocal, and one of the interesting features of the Tiyyar of this
[591] area is that, as with the Sinhalese, polyandrous marriages are freely
[171] permitted. A woman is married to a group of brothers who have access to her, it is said, by order of seniority. The ceremony of marriage
585 again involves the gift of the cloth, and we note the custom of feeding
171 the groom or grooms and the bride with porridge and milk as with various groups in Ceylon.

593 Inheritance is in the male line, but women retain rights in their
[428] natal household. Indeed, this right is expressed in the customary relations between brothers and sisters. At divorce, the woman returns to
[586] her brother. Her eldest brother is considered her guardian. At the
[765] death of a married woman, her brothers and their children observe
[783] ritual pollution. At the death of a man, his sister's sons observe pollution and perform mourning offerings to his spirit.

604 The customary claim of the MB and the FZ are given recognition in
588 numerous ceremonies. In the prepuberty rituals, a girl goes through
[613] a mock-marriage ceremony with a boy from a "lineage" into which
[605] she might marry, who clearly stands to her in the relation of cross-cousin. Her "mother's brother's wife" (FZ?) parts her hair in certain pregnancy ceremonies. The ritual husband-boy is brought by his MB, and the girl by her MB. The boy places the *tali* necklace—indicative of married status—on her neck, where it is tied by her FZ.

582 Gough notes that cross-cousin marriage is "preferential," though
605 with the observation that it is not "enjoined to the extent" that it is
114 in the North (1955*a*, p. 62). It is clear that this statement refers to actual cross-cousin, not categorical cross-cousin, marriage. We are informed that parallel cousins on both sides are tabooed and must conclude that here again we have the Dravidian pattern of categorical cross-cousin marriage.

601 I have no information about the terminology of reference or address,
576 though it seems likely that terms of reference, at least, are identical to those of the North Tiyyar.

121 I think that all the elements of the general structure can be detected
602 in this system. There is categorical cross-cousin marriage, and the various claims of the MB and FZ upon Ego are indicated in ritual terms. This is quite in accordance, as we noted before, with the strong

4: Yalman E-4,5 (1954-1956) 1971 AX4 Sinhalese
Kerala AW11

claim of the brothers and sisters upon one another, a point which is 121
indeed specifically made by Gough (1955*a*, p. 61). 602

In view of all this evidence, it is somewhat disconcerting to discover 602
that Gough finds it necessary to identify "residual matrilineages" to 613
explain the role of maternal kin as well as the taboos on maternal 114
parallel cousins in this caste. We are faced once more with the inexplicable bias in the direction of "lineage" explanations to the exclusion of others even in so sophisticated an observer as Dr. Gough.

She notes (1957*a*, p. 61) that "the former existence of exogamous 602
matrilineal clans underlines this persistence of the bond between 614
women and their natal kinfolk, especially their brothers." But the 114
evidence she gives (p. 60) to show even the former existence of such clans is hardly convincing: "My informants knew nothing about these clans except that they were once exogamous. They are not so today, since some people do not remember their clan names. Though the [582]
clans have died out, marriage is prohibited between known matrilineal kin."

Although the general structure is verified in this group as well, we 602
have no information regarding hypergamy. We can only say with 611
certainty that the comparison of the Tiyyar in North and South [582]
Malabar shows quite directly that slight variations permit the general structure to be linked to a patrilineal as well as a matrilineal descent ideology. The underlying theme is general, and the variations in descent, in residence, in inheritance are local and highly specific.

THE MATRILINEAL CASTES OF COCHIN AND HYPERGAMY

Before we turn to an examination of the aristocratic matrilineages of 121
Cochin which have fascinated many anthropologists by their perfectly 564 •
logical but highly exotic solutions to sex and marriage, I wish to 582
underline some of the principles of endogamy and hypergamy. 613

First, the purpose of endogamy is to cut off the unit from kinship connections with other units. A complete severance of all intercourse (food and sex are usually chosen as symbols) renders the unit unique, but it will not in itself establish hierarchical superiority. To express hierarchy (as well as separation) some asymmetrical relations are logically necessary. In endogamous castes this takes the form of asymmetrical forms of address, dress symbolism, and, significantly, a rule such as "They will take food from us (*A*), but we will not take food from them (*B*)—*A*, in other words, is superior to *B*.

Second, when the groups are placed on an interlocking hierarchy, more subtle expressions can be used. "*A* will not accept food from *B*,

121 but *B* will from *A*; furthermore, *A* will not 'give' women to *B*, but
564 will 'take' women from *B*." The second method (hypergamy), though
582 only a logical development of the first, and a very precise way of
613 manifesting superior status, has complex implications. In effect, a progressive distinction of status is made between the children of the sister (superior) and the children of the brother (inferior). Hence not merely the caste but the entire network of kinship is placed on a gradient of ritual status. Furthermore, if hypergamy is to be combined with lineages, it should be clear that, although the matter can be harmoniously combined with matrilineages (i.e., the brother partaking of the superior ritual connections of his sister), the patrilineal principles raise difficult problems, since the sister is given "away" to a superior group and the brothers can partake in the increase in ritual status only by reason of their claims on her children or in some other indirect fashion. Also, since the position of the woman affects the status of her children in both matrilineal and patrilineal contexts, it appears difficult to combine intracaste hypergamy with patrilineal descent at least in South India. Thus we get ZD marriage (i.e., symmetrical exchange) coupled with Brahman caste endogamy in Tanjore, but an entire scale of hypergamous matrilineages all the way from Kshatriya to Sudra status in Malabar. A similar feature was observed in eastern Ceylon.

The first method (endogamy) permits the ethnographer to make simple statements about discrete categories of people; the second (hypergamy) is more complex, since the status-bearing unit can be a single lineage with hypergamous connections and it may be difficult in the continuous descending steps of status to say exactly where one "caste" category ends and the next begins (see fig. 37).

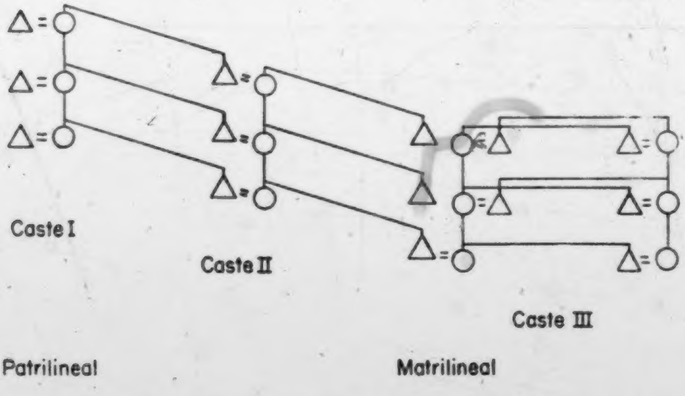
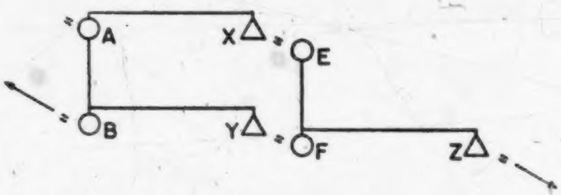


Figure 37. Patrilineal and matrilineal hypergamy.

(1961*b*, pp. 20 ff.), and it is important in tying the Nayar material into 121
the South Indian picture. 613

With all these similarities, in what sense, then, is this system a [114
logical elaboration of the general structure? What makes the structure 184]
of kinship among the aristocratic Nayar a special case is that in it we
find again the combination of hypergamy and unilineal descent.

As we noted above, extensive hypergamy in the context of matrilineage results in a consistent differentiation of status between lineages, and it allows special ritual status to be claimed by each autonomous matrilineage. It will be observed that matrilateral cross-cousin marriage is the only consistent pattern that can be associated with the hypergamous and matrilineal kin structure described above.



121
582
613

Figure 38. Matrilateral cross-cousin marriage.

In figure 38, sister A establishes a *sambandam* connection with a person of superior status. Her children, B and Y (members of the matrilineage), are themselves superior in status to the children of their MB (X), who has a *sambandam* with a woman of equal or lower status to himself (E). Hence if cross-cousin marriage is to take place, the MBD (F) may be hypergamously connected with Y (i.e., matrilateral cross-cousin marriage), but B, like her mother A, will be given further up the hierarchy and cannot be permitted to have *sambandam* with Z (i.e., patrilateral cross-cousin marriage).

We should note in passing that this association of MBD marriage 121
and hypergamy in these castes is a remarkable corroboration of Leach's 114
hypothesis regarding the structural implications of matrilateral cross- 582
cousin marriage systems. Leach (1951) writes of patrilineal systems 611
associated with hypogamy (women go down) among the Kachin. It is [171]
certainly salutary to find that this mirror-image of Leach's model,
that is, matrilateral cross-cousin marriage in a matrilineal context, is
associated with hypergamy, asymmetry, and distinctions of status.

To return to Malabar, the combination of matrilineal descent to- 121
gether with the rules of hypergamy is consistent with great differenti- 564 •
ation of status between the descent groups—so much so that in the 611
proliferation of descent groups it appears to be difficult, indeed impossible, to say where one caste ends and the other begins. Some de-

121 scent groups may be generally placed in the highest categories and
564 still be connected by a chain of descending unions with such categories
611 as the Sudra. To recall the situation in Ceylon, such groups as the
[171] Karava (Fishers), who are usually seen as a "separate" caste in other
parts of the island, are associated with the hierarchy of Vellalar matrilineal descent groups on the eastern littoral. Thus, in the Malabar context, too, a category such as Nayar covers a wide spectrum of
121 ranked descent groups. Gough suggests that apart from the royal
564 matrilineages of the various kingdoms, it is possible to detect five
(613) subcategories of Nayar groups (1961, pp. 308–309): *(a)* Kiriattil and
Vellayma Nayar, *(b)* Puratta Charna (Outdoor Retainers) Nayar (but these have subdivisions such as Paricha Menon (Leaders of the Shield), *(c)* Agatta Charna (Indoor Retainers) Nayar, *(d)* Pallichan Nayar, and *(e)* Sudra Nayar. This is not a hard and fast hierarchy and we are told (p. 309) that "In some districts they ranked in the order given and men of the higher [category] might marry women of the lower [category]; the reverse was in theory forbidden. In other districts the [categories] seem to have disputed for precedence and *not to have regularly intermarried*" (my italics).

121 It is clear that in this system it is possible, for instance, to have
564 at the top a single matrilineage whose men may be connected to a
613 small group of matrilineages who are equals and who marry among
themselves. They in turn may be connected with a larger group of matrilineages of a still lower caste, and so on. Furthermore, actual *sambandam* connections may or may not be systematically established between the levels. As long as the principles are clear, it hardly matters what the status-bearing groups are called: in widening circles we have the matrilineage, which may be part of a hypergamous cluster (category), which in turn may be part of a more inclusive "subcaste" or indeed an endogamous caste.

121 Also in the Cochin region, according to Gough (1961, p. 319), hy-
114 pergamy is a custom of the aristocratic matrilineages and is associated
564 with the prestige of unilineal descent, whereas in the levels "below
613 the Nayar temple menials" the categories were endogamous "as is
usual in the caste system throughout India."

[833] Why hypergamy at the aristocratic levels? Gough in answer to this
question has taken a curious combination of materialist-psychoana-
[554] lytic arguments: it is her theory that hypergamy accords with the
power structure of the political system and with the special reasons why virgins must be deflowered by powerful men before they are safe for ordinary mortals (see Gough 1955*a* and 1961, *passim*).

Dumont has proposed an important, but very different, answer. He notes rightly that the most powerful and superior Nayar lineage still had hypergamous connections with Brahman who were ritually superior but politically inferior to the royal lineages. This would indicate that the arguments emanating from the power structure are of limited value. Nor does the psychoanalytic argument carry conviction (see Yalman, 1963).

121 114 564 613

Dumont further suggests that the Nayar position has significant cultural affinities to certain practices of the Basavi. Among the Basavi, a girl is given in marriage to a god. She may then be approached by all kinds of men, and the children she may bear belong to her own family. Thus by virtue of her marriage to a god, her children are freed from the constraints of the rule of patrilineal descent and follow matrilineal descent. In the same fashion, Dumont thinks the girls of aristocratic matrilineages are married to Nambudiri Brahman, who are referred to as "Gods of the Earth."

Dumont's point is worth making, for it shows the element of piety involved in these customs which have been severely misunderstood in India and elsewhere. The man of the matrilineage sacrifices his own children (who belong to others) in order to give his sister to a god and keep her children.

This may indeed be one of the cultural dimensions of hypergamy in this region, but the system is so clearly and effectively associated with the fundamental structural principles of matrilineal descent groups in a caste context that the specific cultural features (piety, etc.) do not need to be treated as a necessary part of the picture. A similar set of structural circumstances gives rise to an essentially similar picture in Ceylon.

121 564 613 [171]

The general principles of status differentiation in Cochin have been subsumed under the following ideal formula by Karve (1953, p. 269):

Nambudiri m.	marries	Nambudiri f.	Children	become	Nambudiri
Nambudiri m.	=	Ksatriya f.	Children	=	Kshatriya
Ksatriya m.	=	Ksatriya f.	Children	=	non-Kshatriya [*sic.*]
Nambudiri m.	=	Nayar f.	Children	=	Nayar, status 1
Ksatriya m.	=	Nayar f.	Children	=	Nayar, status 2
Nayar m.	=	Nayar f.	Children	=	Nayar, status 3

[851]

It is quite clear that we find the matrilineal *taravad* in its most impressive development as a corporation precisely at the highest levels of society. At the other end of the scale we have only the desire for prestige:

> The Tharvad is always named after an ancestress and referred to as the Tharvad of so and so (woman). If a man does not belong to a Tharvad he is not respected and I was told by an officer in a mill that though he was well educated and a salaried man he had not the requisite social position as

> 121 they were landless orphans. If he bought land, built a house and settled there
> 564 with his sister, bringing up her children, he would gain social status. He said
> 613 he knew of many a poor labourer serving in the mill, saving money to establish
> a Tharvad in his sister's name and become "somebody" in his caste.
> (Karve, 1953, p. 267)

The problem of finding suitable husbands for the women of aristocratic matrilineal Tharvads has been solved by the Nambudiri Brahman connection in Cochin. The situation is not very different with North Malabar aristocrats. We are told that the Kolattiri lineage had difficulty in getting accepted as of high status among the ancient "Kshatriya" lineages of Kottayam and Kurumbranad, so the Kolattiri Rajas brought a caste called Koil Tamburan from Travancore. "Kolattiri women married Koil Tamburan or Nambudiri men and Kolattiri men Samantan Nambiar or Nambiar women" (Gough, 1955*a*, p. 56). Karve with her usual insight and evocative examples puts the issue simply (1953, pp. 258–259): "The Kshatriyas claim descent from the sun-family of the ancient Hindu Kshatriyas of the north—the house of Rama. All the sons born in Kshatriya families, i.e., ruling houses of Travancore and Cochin have Sanskrit names of the Sun-god with the suffix varmā . . . We have already seen that in olden times as a rule and even now generally the Kshatriya women have Nambudiri Brahmins as husbands. . . . There is a village near Cochin belonging to a rich Nayar Thārvad . . . which is called the 'village of evening visits of the Nambudris.'" And this accurate and colorful picture is rounded up with the direct statement, "Among poorer Nayars cross-cousin marriage is favoured."

Other Evidence from Malabar

121 611 We have considered the evidence from Malabar from the point of view of other South Indian systems and have, I believe, been able to establish both the principles of the general structure and the association of systems of hypergamy with unilineal descent. A further point to note is that systems of descent, at least in this region, could be considered as a secondary feature to a large extent independent of the specific forms of kinship and marriage. Very similar groups appear to follow different forms of descent in various regions. We should
[171] recall that even the Sinhalese, who are regarded as being "patrilineal" by many authors today, followed "matrilineal" descent at least among the royal family in the seventeenth century. And conversely one author has noted that in some parts of Kerala "the Nairs also follow the father right social system" (D'Souza, 1959, p. 493).

[564] There is a vast body of literature, especially in connection with

4: Yalman E-4,5 (1954-1956) 1971 AX4 Sinhalese
Kerala AW11

Malabar, in which patrilineal and matrilineal castes who are similar 121
in their kinship customs are described, and again we find that other 564
sections of the same casts are patrilineal or matrilineal in different 611
localities. In parts of Ceylon I would hear villagers suggest that sons [171]
took their "names" from their father and daughters from their mother, a reflection not so much of descent (for these ideas were not applied in practice) but of the difference between the sexes.

Even the Muslims are not very different. On the Malabar coast the 779
diversity of origins in the Muslim community can be easily traced in 184
the complex body of customs, appellations, different signs, and prac- 602
tice whereby subgroups appear to distinguish one another. Gough 613
(1961) has discussed some features of the matrilineal Muslims (Ma- 121
pilla); D'Souza (1959) in a carefully documented article observes that, leaving aside a special group who call themselves *Arabi* and attempt to follow traditional Islam, Muslims in general conform to the patterns of kinship usual in Malabar and are divided into patrilineal and matrilineal *taravads* (p. 492). Moreover, in the case of patrilineal *taravads*, several of them again come together to form an *endogamous* group; hence in any locality there are several endogamous Moplah groups (p. 493). He goes on to make the following observation (p. 498):

> In the coastal North Malabar, as one proceeds southwards to places like Quilandy and Badagara, the mother right social organization undergoes a change. The change becomes quite distinct in the coastal region of South Malabar. The change in mother right traits . . . may be primarily attributed [428]
> to the fact that whereas in North Malabar the ancestral property is inherited exclusively in the female line, in the south it is inherited . . . in the male line. But the social organization is essentially mother right and the modifications are such as suit the change in the principle of inheritance.

It is not merely this shifting picture of descent and inheritance 121
which strikes one as being entirely in line with the material collected 564
by Iyer (1909, 1912, 1937) in all kinds of small caste groups, for 114
D'Souza (1959, p. 502) firmly establishes that the Muslim Mapilla also follow the Nambudiri–Nayar model of hypergamy with considerable dedication: "For instance, the Thangal males can marry women from any other groups of Moplahs [Mapilla] but Thangal women cannot marry any man other than a Thangal. An Arabi male can marry any [Mapilla] woman other than a Thangal, but the Arabi woman can marry, besides an Arabi male, only a Thangal male, and so on."

There is little doubt that the marriage customs recorded by D'Souza 121
bear a close similarity to those recorded for the Moors of Ceylon [58]
earlier in this volume. D'Souza's evidence on names is not directed to [171]
the question of hypergamy and prestige, but it does appear that names [551]

of the two principles in one. Thus, such terms as *massina* (Sinh. and 121
Tamil) and its variants *maittunan* or *maccinan* (Tamil) and *maiduna* 602
(Kannada), all of which carry the implication of cross-cousins who are 171
expected to unite, appear to be derived from the Sanskrit *maiduna* or 812
mithuna which also refers to the sexual intercourse between the god 771
Shiva and the goddess Shakti, who are both one and two.[10] The depic- [601]
tion of them in the very act of union (*mithuna*) is one of the intriguing motifs in Indian religious sculpture, a form of art which in its formal beauty and religious expressiveness is almost unmatched.

These ideas are not intended to be mysterious. They are simply the [564]
logical implications of caste principles carried to their very limit in the highest caste. There should be no doubt at all that Indian thinkers, great logicians and great mystics, should have been concerned with the ultimate origin of purity.[11]

A conception such as this, the union of man and wife, who are also 121
the children of a brother and sister, allows us to observe the principle 602
of *jati* ("caste," but also birth, category) from the inside. The narrow- 564
est circle is the individual. Then the couple, ideally cross-cousins. Then the small circle of kin who intermarry with one another. And going on from this, wider and wider concentric circles and the more inclusive categories of caste. The patterns of North India are likely to [171]
be different, but the principles of caste endogamy are intimately related to the family in South India and Ceylon.

Our itinerary has now been completed. We started from a mountain 121
village in Ceylon and widening our investigations have ended up in 171
South India. Behind the great differences in thought and behavior, we have found that the general principles of kinship appear to have considerable uniformity in this region. Ostensibly, kinship systems can be classified as matrilineal, patrilineal, hypergamous, and bilateral in Ceylon: a rapid journey through the Tamil-speaking parts, the Nilgiri Hills, and the Malabar coast has made us aware that a similar classification is possible in South India. But all these variations appear to exist within the framework of principles common to all the groups we have considered.

It is to be hoped that it will be possible in the future to carry the work farther north in order to learn whether South Indian structures are transformed into North Indian structures. In the realm of kin structure in South India and Ceylon, we appear to be dealing with

---

[10] On the etymology of the terms see Karve (1953), p. 209.

[11] It seems possible that one of the simplest and most frequent ritual acts in Ceylon and South India—the splitting of a coconut into two and allowing the liquid inside to run out—may be a part of *mithuna* symbolism. For the coconut has a *male* and a *female* end: in the act the male and the female are split. This is an idea of wide prevalence in Ceylonese ritual; see Yalman (1966).